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A MODERN AGE BOOK

# THE GREAT BUS STRIKE

LEO HUBERMAN



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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE



Other Books by  
LEO HUBERMAN

*AMERICA, INCORPORATED*  
*THE LABOR SPY RACKET*  
*MAN'S WORLDLY GOODS*  
*WE, THE PEOPLE*



**by Leo Huberman**

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# Foreword

That great Irish man of letters, George Russell, wrote the Foreword to this book, more than a quarter of a century ago. On Oct. 6, 1913 he published an open letter "To the Masters of Dublin" in which he said:

You may succeed in your policy and ensure your own damnation by your victory. The men whose manhood you have broken will loathe you, and will always be brooding and scheming to strike a fresh blow. The children will be taught to curse you. The infant being moulded in the womb will have breathed into its starved body the vitality of hate. It is not they—it is you who are blind Samsons pulling down the pillars of the social order. You are sounding the death knell of autocracy in industry. There was autocracy in political life, and it was superseded by democracy. So surely will democratic power wrest from you the control of industry. The fate of you, the aristocracy of industry, will be as the fate of the aristocracy of land if you do not show that you have some humanity still among you. Humanity abhors, above all things, a vacuum in itself, and your class will be cut off from humanity as the surgeon cuts the cancer and alien growth from the body. Be warned ere it is too late.—Yours, &c.,

"AE"

I say with "AE" that just as autocracy in political life was superseded by democracy so surely will tyranny in industrial life be superseded by democracy.

I wish to express my deep obligation to the officers and members of the Transport Workers Union who gave me so much of their

time in a period when they had so little time to spare; to Gordon Barrager, Milton Reid Stern, Sybil May and my wife, Gertrude, who helped with research; and especially to Agnes Mills, who selected the pictures.

LEO HUBERMAN

New York, May 1941

# CONTENTS

Foreword	v
CHAPTER I Strike!	1
CHAPTER II The Companies	4
CHAPTER III The Union	10
CHAPTER IV "We demand . . ."	20
CHAPTER V "Let's Talk it Over"	26
CHAPTER VI On the Eve	34
CHAPTER VII Diary of the Strike	49
CHAPTER VIII The "Friend of Labor"	144
CHAPTER IX The Press Is Big Business	152
CHAPTER X Mike Quill	156
CHAPTER XI The <i>Great</i> Bus Strike	162



# Chapter I: Strike!

At ten minutes to five on the morning of Monday, March 10, 1941, Frank Hickey walked into the mammoth garage of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company on 132nd Street and Broadway in New York City. He distributed some leaflets to the men inside, shouted "Five o'clock," then left.

Ten minutes later all the workers in the garage laid down their tools and walked out. They took picket signs from Hickey who was waiting outside, and marched in a line before the garage. From time to time other mechanics, bus drivers, and conductors reporting for work came up to the door of the garage, saw the picket line and halted. They were told "The strike is on." Some joined the line; the rest were advised to report for instructions at Union headquarters, Transport Workers Hall.

The same scene was repeated at the three other garages owned by the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, and at the five garages belonging to the New York City Omnibus Corporation.

There were no Fifth Avenue buses on the streets at 5:00 A.M. But the Omnibus Corporation, which runs buses all night, had some out. As the operators of these "night hawks" came to the end of their runs, on every route, they found men with leaflets waiting for them. Every operator read his leaflet, put out the lights in his bus, then, without taking any passengers, sped back to his garage. There he went to the office, turned in his receipts for the night, and reported to the picket captain outside.

A few operators didn't get their leaflets until they were on the trip back to the garage. Acting on instructions, they carried every passenger to his destination first, then rode "dark" the rest of the way.

By 6:00 A.M. not a single bus belonging to the Fifth Avenue Coach Company or the New York City Omnibus Corporation was on the streets of New York. It was the first time since the blizzard of 1888 that Fifth Avenue was without public transportation.

On the page opposite is the leaflet which brought such a prompt response from the drivers, conductors, and mechanics who read it. (The leaflet which went to Fifth Avenue Coach Company employees was the same, except that "Fifth Avenue Coach Company" was printed in place of "New York City Omnibus Corporation.")

This is the story of that strike.

# STRIKE

**5:00 A.M. Monday  
MARCH 10, 1941**

**ALL EMPLOYEES OF  
NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORPORATION  
Will Stop Work at Once!**

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## **OFFICIAL STRIKE CALL**

In accordance with the powers vested in it by the Constitution of the Transport Workers Union of America and by unanimous vote of the membership, the Executive Board of the Transport Workers Union of Greater New York hereby declares all facilities of the NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORPORATION and subsidiary operating companies

## **ON STRIKE**

The strike will be in full force and effect until officially declared off in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

Every Member of the Transport Workers Union in the N. Y. C. Omnibus Branch is required to report immediately to STRIKE HEADQUARTERS at Transport Hall, 153 West 64th Street, New York City, to register, obtain a picket card and receive instructions.

The Strike Committee will have complete charge and authority in all matters relating to the strike.

**With Unity and Solidarity of Transit Labor, Forward to Victory!**

EXECUTIVE BOARD  
Transport Workers Union of Greater New York

*Austin Hogan*  
President



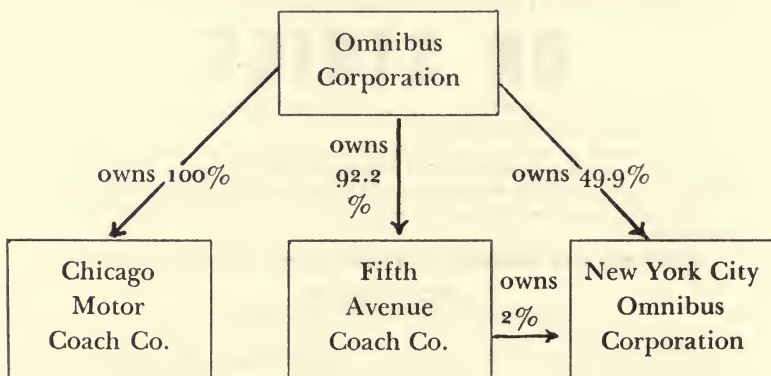
MATTHIAS KEARNS  
General Organizer

5th Ave. Coach and NYC Omnibus Branches

## Chapter II: The Companies

A holding company is a corporation which has the right to own the stock of other corporations. The Omnibus Corporation is a holding company. It owns the stock of three bus systems: 100 per cent of the stock of the Chicago Motor Coach Company; 92.2 per cent of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company; and 49.9 per cent of the New York City Omnibus Corporation.

The Fifth Avenue Coach Company, in turn, owns about 2 per cent of the stock of New York City Omnibus. This gives the Omnibus Corporation, the parent holding company, absolute control of New York City Omnibus. Here is the picture:



This composite picture was the brain-child of John D. Hertz. He founded Chicago Motor Coach in 1922 and then went after Fifth Avenue Coach. After raiding Fifth Avenue of its top executives, he succeeded in uniting it in 1924 with Chicago Motor Coach in a merger out of which Omnibus Corporation was born.

Hertz is a banker, partner in the firm of Lehman Brothers, and Vice-President of The Lehman Corporation. Much of the profits that are paid to stockholders of Omnibus Corporation go to John D. Hertz, who is Mr. Big in urban bus transportation.

The Omnibus Corporation is the largest urban bus company in the United States. It makes money. Lots of it. It has never once failed to pay a dividend on its 62,000 shares of 8 per cent, cumulative preferred stock. Its net profit since 1937 has been over one and a half million dollars each year.

Of the three bus systems "held" by the holding company, the New York City Omnibus Corporation is the biggest money-maker. Its net income for the year 1940 was exactly \$2,008,411.86. According to Dun and Bradstreet, the corporation whose business it is to study the financial set-up of other corporations, New York City Omnibus is doing nicely: "Net income throughout has been of substantial proportions, being close to \$2,000,000 each year."

Last year New York City Omnibus paid out in dividends exactly \$1,583,639.25. On each share it paid \$3.25 in dividends. Since its shares are selling around \$21.00 each, the rate of return was over 15 per cent. That's very high. A broker quoted in the *New York Post* of March 13, 1941, thought so: "The dividend could be cut in half and the return would still be favorable."

New York City Omnibus runs about eight hundred forty single deck buses over eleven avenues, nine crosstown streets, and the Triborough Bridge to Long Island. The routes covered add up to approximately eighty-seven miles. The buses seat thirty-two to forty passengers and an equal number find a place to stand during rush hours. Fare five cents. Because the streets these buses cover are the most congested in the world, there are many starts and stops and the average speed is only six miles an hour.

New York City Omnibus was the successor to the tottering New York Railways Corporation. It operates under a franchise which gives it the exclusive right along certain routes. That right was the only valuable asset of the dying Railways Corporation—the old equipment wasn't worth anything, and in its place New York City Omnibus substituted its new modern streamlined buses. As a result, in 1937, its first full year of operation, passenger revenue

more than doubled over the last year of Railways Corporation.

New York City Omnibus Corporation is a very profitable enterprise. The officers of the Company would not deny that fact.

The Fifth Avenue Coach Company was fifty years old when New York City Omnibus was born. It was the pioneer in bus operation in the United States with its twenty-four-passenger double decker that first appeared in 1905. Today many of its giant double deckers, running over routes adding up to some forty-five miles, carry as many as seventy-two passengers. No standees allowed. Fare ten cents. These huge buses are the only ones left in the United States that are manned by both conductors and drivers.

From 1922 to 1932 Fifth Avenue Coach was a big money-maker. In 1929 its revenues reached a high of \$6,000,000. In 1930 they were almost as great, with net earnings from operation amounting to over \$700,000.

Beginning in 1938, however, Fifth Avenue Coach began to lose money from operation. (Competition from five-cent-fare New York City Omnibus Corporation buses, running along parallel routes, was one important reason.) The figures below show the exact amounts:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount lost from operation</i>
1938	\$ 83,707.27
1939	89,982.45
1940	160,388.76

These figures should be written in red ink.

The picture above, however, is not complete. Fifth Avenue Coach Company, in spite of the losses shown above, made money each of those years. Its net corporate income for

1938	was	\$230,291.59
1939	"	235,637.11
1940	"	65,094.99

These figures should be written in black ink.

Now how was it possible that the Company which lost a little on every passenger it carried ended up in the black? Part of the answer is in the diagram at the beginning of this chapter. Fifth Avenue Coach owns 2 per cent of the stock of New York City

Omnibus Corporation. And New York City Omnibus made a lot of money. So Fifth Avenue Coach had a non-operating income which reads—Interest, Dividends from Investments, Rents (from Omnibus which uses some of its garages). That non-operating income amounted to

1938	—	\$313,998.86
1939	—	325,619.56
1940	—	225,483.75

It was this non-operating income which wiped out the operating deficit and put Fifth Avenue Coach in the black.

But that's still not the whole picture. Every year it lost money Fifth Avenue Coach paid dividends to stockholders amounting to \$480,000. That's one of the reasons Dun and Bradstreet thinks a lot of Fifth Avenue Coach: "Comparative statements have regularly disclosed a strong financial condition, characterized by a high level of liquidity."

One reason Fifth Avenue Coach is described as being in a "strong financial condition" is given in an analysis made by Harry Sacher, the lawyer for the Transport Workers Union. After examination of figures supplied by the Company, he found that its net worth in 1920 was \$3,142,156.

With this net worth, the Fifth Avenue Coach Company literally performed miracles. Beginning with 1922, it has not only paid its stockholders a dividend of approximately \$500,000 each and every year up to and including 1940, but it has also trebled its net worth from \$3,142,156, in 1920, to \$10,356,431 in 1940, although not a single dollar of new money has been invested. It has, in other words, paid, on its 1920 net worth, an annual dividend of more than 16 per cent for nineteen consecutive years, while increasing that net worth by more than 200 per cent. No corporation in America can show half as generous a treatment of its stockholders.

So it seems that Fifth Avenue Coach, which for some years has been crying poor, has for a long time been "performing miracles"—for its stockholders.

Because of its complicated structure (what is here described is only part of the monkey business) it was able to meet its workers'

demand for increased pay with another miracle—the old “heads I win, tails you lose” trick.

In its negotiations with the Transport Workers Union, Fifth Avenue Coach insisted that what must be considered was not the whole financial set-up of the Company, but only the earnings that came from operation. And since, the Company argued, there were no earnings, but a deficit, any demand for an increase in wages was simply out of the question. More to the point, said the Company, was how to cut expenses further so there would be no deficit.

The Union, on the other hand, insisted that non-operating income as well as operating must be considered. It argued further that the Omnibus Corporation and Fifth Avenue Coach and New York City Omnibus were so closely intertwined that the two latter companies could be regarded as one.

The officers of both Fifth Avenue Coach and New York City Omnibus are exactly the same. Five of the seven directors of the first company are directors of the second. There is, without doubt, a very close relationship between the two companies.

Most important of the officers is John A. Ritchie, President of Fifth Avenue Coach in 1918, now Chairman of the Board of both companies. He has worked in the transit industry most of his sixty-two years—first on the Illinois Central Railroad, then with the Interborough Rapid Transit Co., and finally with Fifth Avenue Coach and the Omnibus Corporation. He comes from the Midwest, weighs two hundred fifty pounds, has a bluff, hearty, direct manner which makes him well-liked by his intimates. He lives comfortably on his \$65,000 annual salary. He is half-Irish, and most of the top executives who work under him are Irish too—so are an overwhelming majority of the employees on Fifth Avenue Coach buses.

Ritchie is a scrapper. He loves a fight. In 1934, in Chicago, he was right in the middle of a violent one in which two people were killed and several others were sent to the hospital. The Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, called a strike on Chicago Motor Coach, which had a company union. Ritchie hired strike-breakers and violence resulted. Joseph J.

Kehoe, President of the AF of L Union, described the method by which the Company continued operations: "They combed the dregs of the underworld to find enough local talent to perform one of the bloodiest strike-breaking jobs on record."

The Union lost the strike, and the Chicago Motor Coach Employees' Fraternity, the old company union, is still in existence. Every other transit line in Chicago has a contract with the AF of L Union.

But what was possible in 1934 in Chicago was not possible in 1941 in New York City. Not a single bus ran during the strike in New York. There were no people killed, none hurt.

That strike was conducted by the Transport Workers Union.

## Chapter III: The Union

In Juneau, Alaska, some night soon about ninety-five transit workers will come together for a meeting. The business before the body will be the election of a delegate to represent Local 172 at the third biennial convention of the Transport Workers Union.

The New Orleans local of six hundred members, many of them Negroes, will do likewise. So will the local in Corpus Christi, Texas. And the other sixty-two locals all over the country.

Most of the delegates will be sent from New York City, headquarters of Local 100, the largest and most powerful of all. Local 100 was the nucleus of the Transport Workers Union of America affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

It was not an accident that the Transport Workers Union was born. It had to be. The working conditions of the men on the subways of New York made organization imperative; organization of a bona fide union to take the place of the company union under which a twelve-hour day, seven days a week, with never a holiday off—not even on Christmas or July 4th—was allowed to exist. The Transport Workers Union was born out of the necessities of the situation.

In 1934 a group of transit workers, consisting primarily of former members of the Irish Republican Army, met irregularly in the South Bronx. One of the group's activities was the reading and discussion of the works of the beloved James Connolly, who, during the Easter rebellion, was Commandant-General of the Dublin Division of the IRA. Connolly's picture belongs, where it hangs, on the wall of Michael Quill's office on the first floor of Transport Workers Hall. For in addition to being an Irish patriot, Connolly was a student of the transit industry and at one time



*Transport Photo*

The Union bought this hall in 1937.

served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Irish Transport Workers Union. He wrote at length on the history of transit strikes in both Ireland and New York City, and as far back as 1909 suggested that the job of organization of transport workers could best be done not along craft union lines but on the basis of industrial unionism.

Connolly's message was soon translated into action when Quill, John Santo, Austin Hogan, Douglas MacMahon and three others met in Stewart's Restaurant on 59th Street and Broadway to begin the formation of an industrial union for transport workers. The date was April 12, 1934. Exactly three years later to the day, the Supreme Court of the United States declared the Wagner Act constitutional. Workers were to be given legal protection in their right to organize.

But the transit companies were too steeped in the practice of smashing attempts by their workers to unionize to fall into line. In the 1916 strike of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees of America, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company had spent over \$3,500,000 for strike-breakers; the company union was established and a network of spies was then continued on the payroll to prevent the formation by the workers of a union of their own choosing.

The seven original founders of the TWU moved slowly and cautiously at first. They had to. They used the group system, one man building around himself a group of seven, and each knowing only those in the group as Union members. Quill describes those early days when the founders were haunted by fear of spies: "We used to meet in saloons and hallways, in basements and on roof tops. I remember one meeting under a bridge in Central Park. On that occasion, when Brother Santo said 'One night we will meet in Madison Square Garden,' we pinched each other for fear that John was suffering the effects of overwork."

But John Santo was right. In October 1937 the Transport Workers Union packed Madison Square Garden in a great victory celebration. From its initial group of seven the Union, in New York City alone, had grown to over 40,000 strong. They listened, with justifiable pride, to praise from the leader of the Committee for Industrial Organization, Mr. John L. Lewis:

There may have been somewhere, sometime, a better record of accomplishments than the record made by the Transport Workers Union, but I do not know of any. I know of no parallel accomplishment on the part of a newly formed union, on the part of newly elected officers, in the face of great opposition, than the accomplishment of your officers, your union and your membership.

The newly elected officers were, in the main, the founders of the organization. Their accomplishment was indeed unparalleled in the history of workers' organizations. Union work for five of them was not a full-time job. It had to be done after their twelve hours of work in a ticket agent's booth, or in the cab of a subway train. They had no funds beyond their meagre daily earnings. They were opposed by companies headed by men who were among the bitterest, most powerful anti-unionists in the country.

It was dangerous uphill work. Only after a year of secret activity did they dare to come out in the open. In March of 1935 they began to hold open-air, shop-gate meetings during the half-hour lunch period in front of all barns, shops and powerhouses of the transit companies. "Nobody would listen to us, at first," says Quill. "We would mount our ladders, stick the flag in the groove at the top, then begin to talk—to the wall. A few school children and some passers-by would pause for a moment, then move on. None of the workers would dare to listen. Our only lasting audience would be a couple of stool-pigeons taking notes."

Things have changed since then. The other day Quill mounted the ladder at a shop-gate meeting on 98th Street and Lexington Avenue. Over four hundred workers, their caps conspicuously covered with union buttons, turned out to listen and cheer and eagerly shake his hand. Only six of the four hundred forty-two workers in that shop are not members of the TWU.

Most of the others probably joined in 1937, the year the TWU really went to town by winning every major election held to determine the collective bargaining representative of the men.

The IRT election was held on May 15, 1937. The TWU polled 10,638 votes, 92 per cent of all the ballots cast. An "independent" group got 311 votes; our "own group" got 122 votes; and "no

union" received 62 votes. Motormen and switchmen voted in a separate classification. Result:

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers	— 307 votes
Transport Workers Union	— 938 votes

Signalmen and towermen also voted separately. Result:

Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen	— 147 votes
TWU	— 460 votes

The BMT election was held two months later, on July 31, 1937. The TWU polled 6,269 votes, 86 per cent of all the ballots cast. In the ticket agents' classification, the only one lost by the TWU, the company union which was victorious was later dissolved by the State Labor Relations Board. In the new election among ticket agents between the Amalgamated Association, AF of L, and the TWU, the result was:

Amalgamated	— 424
TWU	— 663

On the Third Avenue Railway, June 1937, the outcome was:

Amalgamated	— 362
No union	— 94
TWU	— 2,373

The employee representation plan election on the Independent Subway came in January, before all the others. It was an eye-opener. Fifty-nine out of seventy-two representatives elected by the men were on the TWU slate.

On the bus systems, too, the TWU was the choice of the workers. In each case the contest was between the TWU and an old established company union. The election on New York City Omnibus was held on June 22, 1937. Result:

Independent Association	— 356
TWU	— 1,249

Fifth Avenue Coach followed one month later:

Employees Association	— 222
TWU	— 832

On the East Side Comprehensive system the TWU lost in the first election, held on August 2, 1937. But a few weeks after the election, the men left the company union for the TWU, and in September the TWU was certified by the State Labor Relations Board as the sole collective bargaining agent. On January 9, 1939, another election was held with this result:

Against the TWU	— 49
TWU	— 290

On Triboro Coach Corp., the score of the election held on November 24, 1939, was:

Amalgamated Association	— 79
TWU	— 161

These results were some of the things John L. Lewis had in mind when he spoke of the TWU's unparalleled accomplishments. There were other results of TWU unionization which helped to account for this succession of victories—results that could be estimated in dollars and cents, in shorter hours, and improved conditions.

Just the threat of organization into the TWU brought wage increases to the men on the IRT in 1935. A signed contract in 1937 brought larger increases, vacations with pay; the 1938 contract threw out a phony pension plan and forced the return of \$2,000,000 of the men's money. A new free pension plan was instituted to which the Company agreed to contribute \$650,000 a year for thirty years. The contracts for 1939 and 1940 won further increases in wages plus sick leave and holiday pay.

On the BMT the gains were substantially the same. On the Independent, very impressive too.

The New York City Omnibus Corporation in its "Annual Report to the Stockholders, Employees and the Public," for the year ended December 31, 1940, has a section called "Additional Costs Involved by Contracts with the Transport Workers Union." It reads:

The estimated cost of the increase in rates of pay and for additional concessions was for last 5 months,

10 days of 1937 and the full year 1938	\$ 578,603.55
2 Years—1939-1940	1,820,288.06
Estimate—First 2 months—1941	158,300.61
Total	<u>\$2,557,192.22</u>

A similar breakdown in the Fifth Avenue Coach report shows:

First Contract . . . Aug. 15, 1937 to Dec. 31, 1938..	\$190,901.10
Second Contract . . . Jan. 1, 1939 to Dec. 31, 1940..	499,664.84
Jan. 1, 1941 to Feb. 28, 1941.....	44,077.04
Total .....	<u>\$734,642.98</u>

All in all, a rough calculation of the gains won by the Transport Workers Union for all its members in New York City since it was organized in 1934 would approximate \$100,000,000. And this doesn't take in resultant increases that went to administrative and supervisory officials not eligible for membership in the TWU.

One hundred million dollars is what it adds up to in money. It is impossible to figure the changes made in the standard of living for the workers—their improved health, their added enjoyment of life that came with shorter work days, vacations, days off, increased security.

Nor is it possible to estimate how much Union classes, clubs, athletics, social activities, have added to their happiness. The Medical Plan of the TWU, at a cost of \$2.00 per year, gives members medical service, including that of nine specialists; if an operation is necessary, the members pay only for hospitalization (reduced rate), nothing for the doctors' services. In 1940, 16,000 members used the Medical Plan. How much was that worth? Who can tell?

All this and more the TWU has brought its members. (That is why it is one of the strongest unions in the CIO.) And for all this, and more, the dues are \$1.75 per month for every member who receives 77 cents or over per hour; and \$1.25 per month for every member who receives less than 77 cents per hour. Initiation fee is \$3.00, which covers the first month's dues.

The officers of the TWU, from Mike Quill down, receive for the "faithful performance of their duties (the Constitution reads) \$2,600 per annum"—\$50 per week.

That's not much money for the men who have devoted seven years of their lives to building and strengthening the Union. But they don't ask for more. Mike Quill's comment on his salary is "I was always used to less, so I can get along all right."

The Union owes a great deal of its success to its present leaders, most of whom were its founders. They work together—hard and long—and the qualities of each is capitalized to the utmost.

Of Mike Quill, the President of the International, more will be said later.

Douglas MacMahon, Vice-President of the International, worked as a painter for the IRT until 1935, when he, with Quill, was selected at a general membership meeting to devote his full time to organizing. He is director of organization on the BMT. A fiery speaker and a tireless worker, he has organized for the International in Buffalo, Louisville, Huntington, West Virginia. In Schenectady, recently, he negotiated a contract which provided a ten-cent-an-hour increase to busmen.

John Santo, Secretary-Treasurer of the International, is one of the Union's key figures. He is not an Irishman, but he talks like one. He is a brilliant person with a penetrating mind that has helped to steer the Union wisely through one crisis after another. A student of history, with an excellent memory, he can make a good speech better by the use of homely illustrations from the past. On him falls most of the burden of day-to-day management of the affairs of the Union.

Austin Hogan, the popular President of Local 100, is modest, unassuming, reflective. He is a civil engineer by profession, and in the early days, because he was not working for any of the transit companies, he was able to sign his name to leaflets without fear of losing his job. Once he has made up his mind, nothing can stand in his way—he will make for the goal with a tenacity and strength that is rare.

Joseph Fody, two-hundred-pound Vice-President of Local 100, was the leader of the famous 1937 sit-in strike at the BMT power-

house on Kent Ave., Brooklyn. The strikers won reinstatement for two of Fody's fellow-engineers. Fody is MacMahon's right-hand man on BMT organization.

Gus Faber, the Secretary-Treasurer of Local 100, is a middle-aged, sober Dutchman, ideally suited to his job. He husbands every dollar in the treasury. His sincerity and zeal are apparent—the Union is his life.

James J. Fitzsimon, Recording-Secretary of Local 100, was the first motorman to join the TWU. He worked on the IRT and was active in the strike of 1926. He handles grievances for the subway men for which they are extremely grateful, because Fitz is a tough fighter first, last, and all the time.

Maurice Forge is editor of the *Transport Bulletin* which, since TWU was founded, has been a vehicle for driving home the Union's message. Whenever there's a leaflet to write, pictures to be taken, movies to shoot or show, the call comes—"Let Forge do it."

No other labor lawyer in America has become so integral a part of any union as has Harry Sacher in the TWU. He can talk the language of the men—the legalistic approach is left for the courtroom. He is a student of economics and his briefs are unusual in that they often emphasize the economic aspect of a situation as well as the legal. He has a first-rate mind, is skilled in debate, and can make an impassioned speech, enlivened with sarcasm and humor.

Matthias Kearns did for the bus lines what the founders of the Union did for the subway systems. He was perfectly suited to the job of organizing. From 1929 to 1933 he was a conductor for the Fifth Avenue Coach. In 1933 he joined the Amalgamated Association and was fired. The Company said "Too many complaints" from the passengers. Matt and the Amalgamated said "Union activity." For months before he was fired he was shadowed by a spy at all times. He has all the qualities that make the ideal organizer—perseverance in the face of defeat, balance in the flush of victory, an instinct for workers, charm, and a strong constitution. The men on the bus lines—and their wives—swear by Matt.

A former reporter and still a member of the American Newspaper Guild, Saul Mills has handled publicity for the Union.

When the bus strike came, Mills was serving as Secretary of the Greater New York Industrial Union Council. Because that body felt the strike was crucial for the CIO in the city and because Mills had sat in the councils of the TWU in the past and knew the problems it faced, he was released to serve again as publicity man. He is always serene, come what may. His relations with the working press are exemplary. He knows his business.

These were the men on whom the responsibility had fallen for leadership of the great Transport Workers Union. The members of the Union had faith in their leaders. The leaders of the Union had their strength renewed daily by contact with the members.



Executive Board, Transport Workers Union of America.

Around table, left to right: William Grogan, Warren G. Horie, Michael Clune, Joseph B. English, Austin Hogan, John Santo, Michael J. Quill, Maurice H. Forge, A. L. Calhoun, Joseph J. Fody, James E. Gahagan, and Matthias Kearns. Center front: Douglas L. MacMahon.

## Chapter IV: "We Demand..."

There is a blackboard on the wall of each of the four floors at Transport Hall. And every night during the week the blackboards are covered with announcements of committee meetings in the small offices, section meetings in the large classrooms, and branch meetings in the auditorium.

January and February 1941 was a period of many meetings, important ones. For the contract with the bus companies expired on February 28, and the busmen—drivers, conductors, mechanics, utility men—had to discuss their problems and frame their demands. None knew better than they the conditions that cried out for correction; the grievances, large and small, that had to be adjusted; the improvements in wages and hours that had to be sought. None knew better than they that the bus business was a bad business for the men who actually operated the buses.

In one section meeting after another they rose to their feet and talked. The "extras," some of them with the companies for fifteen years, railed against the prevailing system under which they never knew on one day whether there was work for them the next; drivers afflicted with stomach ulcers—so prevalent as to be termed by doctors "drivers' stomach"—argued for longer vacations to relieve the constant nervous tension of their daily routine; others, also under doctors' care, spoke of the noxious fumes they breathed, the frequency of colds due to the fan on their necks in the summer heat, and the recurrent drafts in winter when they are not permitted to wear an overcoat; some recited their personal medical history since working on the buses—stories of occupational diseases like constipation and hemorrhoids, of high blood pressure and "nerves"; men with large families stressed the necessity for increases in pay so

they could give their children the things presently denied them; old-timers twenty and thirty years with the companies called attention to the absence of a pension plan that would give them security in old age; and all were unanimous in their demand for a shorter day—a few drove the point home by citing their own cases of a ten-hour working day which was stretched to twelve hours because they had a "swing" between their first and second shifts.

The minutes of the meeting of the morning session of Section 403, Fifth Avenue Coach, held on January 21, records the debate, then concludes with "the following program":

**Wages**—The victory of the busmen in Schenectady and the increase in wages they and other busmen have received indicates that we in New York, where riding is so heavy, are entitled to a substantial increase. All men should be given a \$25 minimum [this applies to "extras"].

**Hours**—An 8-hour day and a 48-hour week.

**Holidays**—All national holidays, which are eight, should be paid holidays.

A sound pension plan paid for by the company.

The reinstatement of seniority rights to the men of the 1916 strike, prior to that strike.

All men who are and were the victims of robberies of their changers and receipts shall be compensated by the company. [Under the rules at present, a driver who is slugged over the head and robbed must make up the loss to the companies!]

No contract should be drawn up to pass a one-year period due to the conditions of the world and the increase in living costs that we have at present. Changes in contracts would have to be made to comply with those increases.

Meeting adjourned at 2 P.M.

Patrick J. Byrne

Other sections debated the various questions and formulated their demands.

There followed meetings of the officers and stewards of New York City Omnibus and Fifth Avenue Coach to discuss the demands and condense them for presentation to the larger branch meetings.

On February 11 more than a thousand employees of Omnibus filled the auditorium at Transport Hall to capacity. They were

enthusiastic because Company earnings were high and they looked forward to substantial improvements in wages and working conditions.

One key objective was present in everybody's mind. It was dramatically introduced when four men marched into the hall carrying a coffin inscribed: THE NINE-HOUR DAY. Behind them, to the accompaniment of whistling, stamping, and rounds of applause, came a driver wheeling a baby carriage which bore the slogan: THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY—OUR BABY.

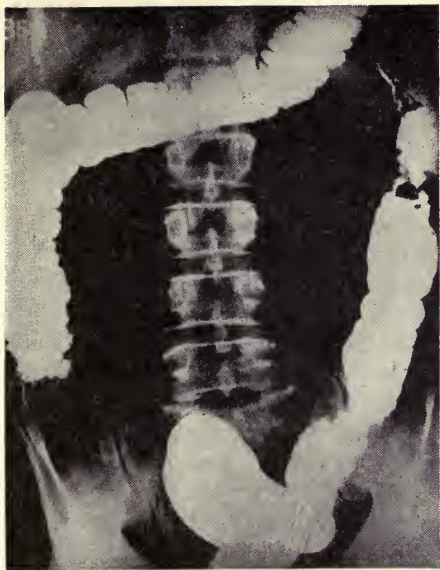
Placards calling for the eight-hour day appeared suddenly and were distributed throughout the hall. Some were placed on the speakers' platform.

Matt Kearns gave a report on the demands prepared at the section meetings and condensed by the officers and stewards. That opened the discussion. It was soon apparent that the men were in earnest about the need for changes. They were straightforward, militant. Theirs was not a timid program. They wanted a great deal.

Austin Hogan spoke, then John Santo. They both stressed the necessity for thinking clearly and moving cautiously. Santo tried to pull the most belligerent ones down to earth:

I did not intend to speak at this Omnibus membership meeting here tonight because the report given by Matty was given in the name of all the officers of the Union. However, considerable criticism has been levelled by a number of brothers against the wage proposals and the limits set for improvement of working conditions. It is my duty and responsibility to answer these criticisms even though I may be booed here tonight as I was two years ago when we brought the second Omnibus contract back.

There is a brother who spoke here tonight telling us not to come back with the contract unless it provides for a pension plan giving employees the right to retire after twenty years of service at half pay—and this to be made retroactive to date of employment of each employee. Of course he was applauded. But did those who applauded him take the trouble of sitting down with paper and pencil to figure out the cost of any such plan? Do you fellows know that such a plan might cost a sum running into millions and millions of dollars?



A normal intestine looks like this; the muscles are relaxed, permitting free movement of the bowels.

95 per cent of New York City bus drivers have intestinal disorders; muscles are contracted, seriously hampering free bowel movement.



*Courtesy PM*

Another brother on the balcony tells us not to dare sign a contract if we don't get an hourly rate of pay of \$1.50, on the ground that at one time there were street cars operating these routes, that then there were two men on each street car, and that their combined pay was, or should have been, \$1.50. Of course, this brother was also applauded.

If this Union is to endure and grow stronger, it will require better thinking; it will require a search for facts, for truth, for wisdom. No union can be all things to all men. Those who advocate \$1.50 an hour are applauded. Those who advocate a Utopian pension plan are applauded. But applause won't pay for these things. And it is my humble judgment that if the Omnibus Company would have to meet these demands, they would give you the property for keeps and thank you for it.

Since I am on the negotiating committee you are entitled to know my attitude on this matter. I believe we are entitled to and should secure improvements. How much, what, and when is the question. Certainly we are not satisfied, cannot be satisfied, nor should we be satisfied with what we have. The law of life is progress and progress means a change for the better. If our ancestors, the cave men, were satisfied living in the cave, the world would not have moved on. If your forefathers were satisfied with things as they were in Europe centuries ago, there would be no mighty United States, no City of New York, and no Fifth Avenue on which to roll double-deck buses. It is our right and obligation to improve our standards of living for ourselves, so that we can leave as a heritage to our children more than what we had when we were children. This is the way of civilization. This is the American way—striving to make the lot of each generation better than the previous one and making each year brighter than the past one. In this spirit and with this attitude do I propose to enter negotiations with the Omnibus Corporation.

Matt Kearns was the next speaker. He predicted confidently that the negotiating committee would "bring home the bacon." Then he appealed for complete unity of action behind the program to be adopted and asked the men to heed the recommendations of the International officers, "whose good faith, wisdom and courage has never failed us in the past."

A modified list of demands was then submitted for adoption. In

the discussion that followed, some continued to argue for proposals which had been scaled down or omitted entirely. Others defended the newer, more reasonable demands.

The question was called on the modified list. . . . A few dissenting votes from a handful of drivers who continued to shout for \$1.50 an hour.

On February 19, 1941, the Union submitted the demands of the Omnibus workers to the New York City Omnibus Corporation.

On February 21, 1941, the Union submitted the demands of the Fifth Avenue workers to the Fifth Avenue Coach Company.

The stage was set for negotiations for new contracts.

## Chapter V: "Let's Talk it Over"

Negotiations between the companies' representatives and the Union negotiating committee were not a new thing. The Union had bargained collectively for its men in 1937 and 1938. On both occasions it presented demands that were considered very stiff by the companies, but after protracted negotiations, agreements satisfactory to both sides were signed.

New York City Omnibus operator Donald McDougall's hours and wages over a period of years will serve to illustrate the gains made in those important fields:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	<i>Rate per hour</i>
1935	60 to 70	69¢
1937	60 to 70	74-82¢
1939	54	90¢

For Fifth Avenue Coach, the record of driver Michael Flanigan is typical:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	<i>Rate per hour</i>
1935	70	75¢
1937	70	79¢
1939	60	81¢

And the record of conductor Dan Carolin shows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Hours per week</i>	<i>Rate per hour</i>
1935	70	68¢
1937	70	72¢
1939	60	74¢

Both sides knew what to expect when negotiations began on February 19, 1941. The Union demands were not an ultimatum—they were the starting point for the collective bargaining process. The demands would be met with a refusal by the companies; there would be further jockeying, a give-and-take procedure, and continued bargaining. Then if the experience of the past was to serve as a guide, there would be more conferences, compromise, agreement, and a signed contract.

But this time it didn’t work out that way.

The demands on New York City Omnibus were discussed briefly at the first meeting. One week later there was a fuller discussion in which the demands on Fifth Avenue Coach were also considered. Present for the companies were John A. Ritchie; John E. McCarthy, boyish-looking President of both companies; Joseph T. McCarthy, Vice-President in charge of transportation; Edmund C. Collins, friendly, neatly-dressed Secretary-Treasurer; and Boykin C. Wright, counsel.

For the Union, Michael J. Quill, John Santo, Harry Sacher, Austin Hogan, Matthias Kearns, Saul Mills, and the thirteen section officers who made up the rest of the negotiating committee.

The companies’ representatives argued that they had given substantial increases before; that Fifth Avenue had suffered an operating deficit; that while Omnibus was making money, the return might be short-lived because of the possibility that the city would recapture the franchise in 1945. And anyway when was the Union going to stop asking for more?

The Union countered with the need for further improvements in conditions, the threatened increase in cost of living, and, if there is so much money available for stockholders, why not a little for us?

So it went, back and forth. Then the Company announced it would have a complete analysis made of the cost of all the demands.

On March 4 the analysis was ready in two large printed booklets, blue cover for Omnibus, white for Fifth Avenue. This was the only time in the Union’s experience that the answer of the companies was done so elaborately, in printed form. It was the

first clue the Union had that things might not go too smoothly on this occasion. The booklets contained general statements that made the Union representatives feel that the companies did not intend to do business with them in the old way. It was obvious, they thought, that these booklets were not addressed solely to them; it looked as though the companies had decided not to yield on anything, and to take their case to the public.

The more important demands of the Union and the cost as analyzed by the companies, follows:

*For New York City Omnibus:*

### TRANSPORTATION

Estimated  
Increases In  
Annual Cost  
Based on 1940  
Operation

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Starting rate of 75¢; top rate of \$1.12½ per hour to be paid upon completion of one year of service. Ten cents an hour extra to be paid for driving buses with a seating capacity exceeding that of the present buses.....   | \$799,514.53 |
| 2. No employee shall receive less than \$25. per week.....   | No Estimate  |
| 3. No regular employee shall be paid for less than eight (8) hours per day; swing time exceeding one hour shall be paid for at regular hourly rates; work performed in excess of eight (8) hours and work performed after the expiration of ten (10) hours from the time of reporting shall be paid for at the overtime rate of time and a half..... | 381,905.34   |
| 5. Employees having more than one (1) year of service shall receive three (3) weeks vacation with pay.....   | 131,475.25   |
| 6. All employees shall receive eight (8) holidays with pay in each year. Employees whose services are necessary on any holiday shall, within thirty (30) days after such holiday occurs, be allowed another day off with pay.....  | 74,844.89    |
| 10. The company shall provide insurance against hold-ups while on the job .....  | 2,000.00     |
| 12. Seniority shall be restored to employees who lost same as a result of 1916 strike.....   | _____        |

### MAINTENANCE

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1. The rates of mechanics shall be increased so as to equal the top rate of bus drivers; the rates of all other garage employees shall be increased by 25%, but in no event shall any employee be paid less than \$25. per week..... | \$165,970.29 |
| 4. Cleaners on the night shift shall receive 5¢ more per hour than cleaners on the day shift.....  | 6,342.30     |

11. The provisions as to vacations and sick leave shall be the same for maintenance employees as for bus operators..... \$31,530.50

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

3. Provision for pay differential, seniority and reinstatement of conscripts shall be made..... No Estimate
4. Provision for arbitration of differences or disputes, including those in connection with ability of men to continue in service \_\_\_\_\_
6. Establishment of an adequate pension..... No Estimate

### *For Fifth Avenue Coach:*

## TRANSPORTATION

Estimated  
Annual Cost  
of Demands  
Based on 1940  
Operation

1. Starting rate of 65¢ per hour for conductors and 75¢ per hour for drivers; top rate of 93¢ per hour for conductors and \$1.01 per hour for drivers to be paid upon completion of one (1) year of service. Drivers of single deck buses shall receive \$1.12½ per hour ..... \$416,465.08
5. Fifteen (15) minutes with pay shall be allowed for turning in money ..... \$ 34,583.12  
Extra service  
would increase  
this figure.
7. Pay shall be given for time spent by the drivers and/or conductors in travelling from one garage to another to obtain or deliver a bus or to turn in money..... \$ 10,030.52  
This is not an  
absolute figure.  
It is variable  
with every new  
schedule.

## GARAGES

1. Mechanics receiving 80¢ and 82¢ per hour shall receive 90¢ per hour, and those receiving 75¢ and 77¢ per hour shall receive 85¢ per hour. Helpers shall receive 80¢ per hour; those who within six (6) months from the date of the making of the contract qualify as mechanics shall be deemed mechanics and receive 85¢ per hour after six (6) months from the date of the agreement, unless a helper fills the vacancy arising among mechanics, in which event he shall receive 85¢ per hour from the date when he fills such vacancy..... \$ 11,090.01
2. Road mechanics, battery mechanics, electricians and building department mechanics shall receive 90¢ per hour and helpers 80¢ per hour..... \$ 3,805.98

6. Washers, cleaners, gas, oil and floormen shall receive 75¢ per hour; those engaged in night work shall receive an additional 5¢ per hour, and engine cleaners shall receive 5¢ per hour more than other cleaners..... \$ 19,914.36

(Using only 30% of cost for each item as estimated proportion chargeable to Fifth Avenue Coach Company)

### SHOPS

1. Mechanics now receiving 89¢ or more per hour shall receive \$1.25 per hour; those now receiving less than 89¢ per hour shall receive \$1.10 per hour. Helpers shall receive 90¢ per hour. Helpers who within six (6) months after the execution of the contract qualify as full-fledged mechanics shall, upon the expiration of said six (6) month period, be classified as mechanics and receive \$1.10 per hour unless they fill a vacancy among mechanics prior to the expiration of said six (6) month period in which event they shall be classified as mechanics and receive \$1.10 per hour from the date on which they filled such vacancy \$ 38,955.73
5. Present seniority rights shall be continued except that colored cleaners shall be entitled to promotion in accordance with their seniority, if qualified, and P. Hanly, L. Wolfe, Thomas Gaffrey and William Love shall be restored to their prior seniority... No estimate.
6. All employees with more than three (3) years seniority shall be guaranteed fifty-two (52) weeks of work per year..... No estimate.

### GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. No employee shall receive less than \$30 per week..... \$ 9,726.08
5. Passes for all lines of New York Omnibus Corp..... Impossible to estimate.
6. Establishment of an adequate pension system..... No estimate.

The companies' estimate of the annual additional cost of those items which could be estimated was:

For New York City Omnibus —	\$2,002,681.04
For Fifth Avenue —	1,243,056.07

The booklets go on, at great length, to argue the case for the companies against the Union. Then, in the section marked "Conclusion," came a heading which caused consternation to Union representatives. They had anticipated their demands would be fought. They had expected that they would not get all they asked. But they did not expect that, in a period of rising cost of living,

there would be any such proposition presented to them as they now saw, in black and white under "Counter Demands."

Under that heading, in the case of New York City Omnibus, they found:

New York City Omnibus Corporation proposes to the Union that the present rates of pay shall be continued, and that all other terms and provisions of the contract which expired on February 28, 1941, and all working conditions, shall be continued; except that we propose (a) the elimination of the Sick Benefit Fund and (b) the elimination of pay for employees not working on holidays, because we feel there is no justification for these two provisions in precedent, in logic or in fairness.

And for Fifth Avenue Coach:

### COUNTER DEMANDS

	Estimated Saving per Annum
PROPOSAL NO. 1	
One-man operation on Jackson Heights Line.....	\$ 72,000.00
One-man operation on all other routes after 7:00 P.M.....	45,000.00
Elimination of pay for employees not working on holidays.....	13,196.00
Elimination of Sick Benefit Fund.....	7,500.00
Maximum Vacation to be One Week instead of Two Weeks....	30,000.00
Total .....	<u>\$167,696.00</u>

### OR, IN THE ALTERNATIVE

Elimination of pay for employees not working on holidays.....	\$ 13,196.00
Elimination of Sick Benefit Fund.....	7,500.00
Straight reduction in hourly rates of pay of all operating employees of amounts sufficient to aggregate approximately....	147,000.00
Total .....	<u><u>\$167,696.00</u></u>

This was the first time, in any of the conferences, that the Union committee had heard these counter-demands mentioned.

On Thursday, March 6, the last conference was held beginning at 11:00 A.M. There was a fierce argument, the Company insisting that the Union demands were so exorbitant as to be confiscatory; that the counter-demands were just and reasonable—and in the case of Fifth Avenue essential to the financial solvency of the property.

All this, Union representatives denied. They showed their re-

sentment at what they insisted were outrageous counter-demands. They intimated that what they wanted more than anything else was an eight-hour day without loss in weekly wages; and a pension plan.

On this latter point they stressed the fact that the men in both companies had a phenomenal record of service and were entitled to the security which only a pension plan, in the absence of a really adequate living wage, could provide.

On Fifth Avenue Coach, they showed that of the 452 drivers, 401 had been with the Company ten years, over 240 fifteen or more years; and over 100 were past fifty years of age.

The record of service for conductors was even more amazing: of the 399 employed, over 375 had ten or more years of service; and over 250 fifteen or more; and over 190 were past fifty.

For the whole staff the totals were:

75 per cent of the men employed by Fifth Ave.—ten or more years of service

50 per cent—fifteen or more years

30 per cent of the men over fifty years of age.

Attention was drawn, by the Union spokesmen, to the difference in the Company's treatment of its machinery and its men. Every year for ten years the Company had set aside sums ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 for "depreciation of buses, buildings and property." "But," Harry Sacher pointed out, "for the depreciation of men—nothing!"

More heated argument—with settlement still not in sight.

Recess for lunch—and for cooling of heads.

The Union negotiating committee returned at the appointed hour of 3:00 P.M. At the door, Ritchie's secretary met the group with "You can't go in yet. Mr. Ritchie isn't back."

Sacher replied in his deep resonant voice, "We're going in. It ill behooves the dignity of Labor to stand around waiting on Capital."

"Yes, sir," the young lady replied—and opened the door.

The Union committee began the afternoon session with a request for "a reasonable counter-proposal" from the companies.

Company spokesmen said they stood on their counter-demands. If that wasn't satisfactory, they offered to mediate, or arbitrate, or extend the existing contracts for one, two or three months until differences were ironed out.

The committee refused these offers. They argued that on the two previous occasions in 1937, and 1938, the two sides had consummated an agreement without resort to mediation or arbitration. They had demonstrated their ability to come to terms without outside help; therefore this pessimism was not justified. "Let's negotiate further. Let's sit some more."

Ritchie's answer was, "No! unless you are prepared to accept our counter-demands."

Committee's reply, "We will not accept any mediation or arbitration that comprehends your counter demands. Are you prepared to make us any other offer? If not, we will take your proposals to our membership, but we warn you their temper is such that they will vote 'strike.' "

Ritchie turned to Santo and asked, "Santo, do you think your demands are reasonable?"

Santo answered, "Yes, the demands of the men are reasonable."

Ritchie arose, said he had to go to the doctor and was going to leave.

*Quill:* No final offer?

*Ritchie:* No!

*Quill:* You're asking for it.

That was the end. Negotiations had broken down.

# Chapter VI: On the Eve

## FRIDAY, MARCH 7

The Royal Windsor Hall on 66th Street and Columbus Avenue is only a few blocks from Union headquarters on 64th Street. For ordinary Union meetings the auditorium at Transport Workers Hall is adequate, but big mass meetings must be held in the more spacious ballroom of the Windsor.

The special membership rally of Friday, March 7 was such a meeting. It was originally called to start the ball rolling in the campaign for renewal of subway contracts with the Board of Transportation. Only the BMT Branch members were not invited, since five thousand of them had held an overflow meeting of their own on the previous Tuesday. Their resolution calling upon the Board of Transportation to "enter into collective bargaining with the TWU with a view to entering into a written agreement in respect to our wages, hours and working conditions, for the period following the expiration of our present contract" was on the Friday agenda for approval by IRT and Independent Subway workers.

The subway workers came—over 5000 of them. And the bus drivers, conductors, and mechanics came too—over 2500 of them. They had learned of the collapse of negotiations with the bus companies and they wanted to do something about it.

Union cards were carefully scrutinized at the entrances. Committees directed and seated the various groups in separate sections of the hall. Omnibus Corporation employees in the center, Fifth Avenue Coach employees on the right. As the hall filled, then overflowed, incoming Omnibus members were sent to the right wing of the balcony.

The turnout was the largest in TWU history. It was soon obvious that the important part of the program in the minds of the audience was not the opening of the subway campaign but the report on the breakdown of bus negotiations.

Douglas MacMahon, International Vice-President, who spoke first, and Bill Grogan, Independent Subway organizer, who followed him, sensed that fact and cut short their speeches on the subway contracts. Mrs. Edna Gallagher brought greetings from the Ladies' Auxiliary of the TWU and invited everybody to the Auxiliary dance on April 19th.

Then followed what had become the main business of the evening—the report on the bus situation.

Even before Matt Kearns was fairly launched on the subject, the temper of the audience was obvious in the cries of "Strike! Strike!" When he had finished, the applause was so terrific that Chairman Austin Hogan had to wait until Kearns had made a thank-you speech before he could introduce the next speaker, John Santo.

During the negotiations, Ritchie told us our demands amount to confiscation of property [said Santo]. Well, do we want to take their buses away? What the hell would we do with them? We couldn't take the damn things home. Our miserable apartments are too small. All we propose to do is take away a little from the profits of the transit companies and give it to the bus drivers. We are not satisfied with what we have and we know a simple thing—that justice is on our side.

[Cries of "Strike!" "Tell 'em, John!" "Let's have a strike vote!"]

Can Ritchie operate the buses? What would Delaney look like if he donned a uniform and tried to run a train? . . .

I am a patient man but I sat through four days of negotiations and I come back now to tell you the story, to back up Matt Kearns in all that he said. What is Ritchie's answer to our demands? His answer is "No increase, but I am going to operate the big Fifth Avenue buses with one man and take away your holidays and sick leave with pay."

The cheering which punctuated Santo's speech throughout made it clear that the busmen meant business. They didn't like

the Company's counter proposals, and they were saying so as often and as loudly as they could.

Chairman Hogan next introduced "one of our own, one whose heart is not set on the fees that come with brilliance and with knowledge, but one whose heart and mind are directed toward the improvement of conditions for workingmen and women—our counsel and friend, Harry Sacher."

The audience followed closely Sacher's analysis of Company finances. It alternately rocked the hall with jeering for the proposals of the bus officials and cheering for the statement of the Union position. When he said, "The TWU will not accept political or economic dictatorship," the enthusiastic response of the crowd made it plain that the vote on a motion to strike would be carried overwhelmingly.

It was.

The chairman called for a motion to suspend the regular order of business. Made and carried.

*Hogan:* "At this time a special meeting of the members of the Fifth Avenue Coach Branch is convened. They now have submitted to them the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, after prolonged negotiations, the Fifth Avenue Coach Company has arbitrarily rejected each and every one of the demands of the TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA for increased wages, shorter working hours, and improved working conditions, be it

"RESOLVED, that all employees of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company go out on strike in support of said demands on Monday, March 10, 1941.

"All Fifth Avenue members in favor of this resolution stand and raise your passes and union cards."

They rose—a solid column of uniformed men which stretched from the speakers' platform to the extreme end of the ballroom.

A "Nay" vote was called. The hall was silent for perhaps a half-minute while necks were craned. . . . No one.

"Resolution adopted unanimously.

"I now convene the New York City Omnibus Branch of the Transport Workers Union."

Same procedure. Same result—with balcony overflow waving their cards and cheering.

"Resolution adopted unanimously." It was 10:40 P.M.

This was the first time in the history of the Union that a strike vote was taken instead of a vote empowering the Executive Board to act when it saw fit. The moment had come for a show of strength.

Twenty-five hundred busmen had indicated their willingness to engage in a showdown struggle against a great transit corporation. It was a historic moment. Mike Quill, the last speaker, knew it. He was brief, to the point:

This is a serious job we are entering into, a great fight. Tomorrow night there will be a meeting of officers. They will get full instructions. No one is to move until you get printed forms signed by Hogan. We will conduct this strike in an orderly way. We will have large picket lines. We will refuse to allow anyone on the picket line who is looking for trouble or who has been drinking.

We serve notice that the TWU is not going into storage. We ask you to show the unity from now on that you have expressed here tonight. We will have the support of all branches of the TWU as well as of the 400,000 CIO men and women in the city of New York.

We offered the hand of friendship to Ritchie and he refused. He wanted a fight and we'll give it to him. Hail to our final victory, to our greater TWU, to our better standard of living! Let us go forward together and win!

## SATURDAY, MARCH 8

The worst snowstorm of the year began on Friday evening. By Saturday morning there were ten inches on the ground.

There was another strike meeting scheduled at the Windsor at 10:30 A.M. The TWU always holds meetings for night workers on the morning following the day workers' meeting. The weather was so bad this Saturday, however, that some Union officials thought the smaller auditorium in Transport Hall might have been a better place for the meeting.

But they were wrong. One thousand night-shift bus workers and another thousand other transit workers—the biggest morning meeting in the Union's history—turned out. On their way to the Windsor they had had an opportunity to read in the morning papers accounts of the evening meeting. They read too the statement made by Mr. Ritchie:

There is no justification whatever for a strike on our bus lines. We have offered to mediate this situation, to arbitrate, or to extend temporarily the contracts which have just expired. That offer still stands. If the union wishes to settle the issues involved without inconveniencing the riding public we will meet at once with its representatives either in mediation or arbitration and thus save the employees and ourselves loss of money and, what is more important, save the public from much discomfort.

As the workers listened to the reports of their leaders, it soon became apparent that they disagreed with their employer's statement that "there is no justification whatever for a strike on our bus lines." They had formulated their demands over a period of several months. Now they were learning that each of these demands had met with a refusal by management. They were learning, further, that the working conditions they had won after years of struggle were in danger.

They wanted to strike.

They showed it in their applause, cheers, enthusiastic interruptions of the speakers. When the question was put to them the vote was again unanimous—"Strike!"

The vote of the membership was the signal for immediate action by the Union leaders. There were only two days and two nights left for planning and preparing. It wasn't much time.

All day Saturday, Strike Committee Chairman Matt Kearns was in conference with officers, stewards, key men. Some he sent home to rest; others he dispatched to various points "around the road" to talk to the workers. A few had to be steamed up, most had to be restrained.

Every minute of the day section officers and rank-and-filers either called up or came up. They wanted to ask certain questions:

"What time do we strike on Monday?"

"What shall I do to help?"

And they wanted to tell certain things:

"Just came from the garage—everybody is 100 per cent."

"Nothing will roll on Monday—you can count on us, Matt."

Matt Kearns was a very busy man that Saturday.

So was Saul Mills who was handling publicity. The threatened strike was headline news in all the papers. Reporters were at the hall all day waiting for handouts, trying to get the dope on this angle or that. They wanted the Union's answer to the Mayor's statement that morning following his early conference with bus company representatives. "I do not believe that a strike would serve any useful purpose," said LaGuardia. He had offered his services as mediator, adding that the companies were willing to continue negotiations or arbitrate the dispute.

Reporters queried Mills on why Union representatives had not attended the conference with the Mayor. He pointed out that the Union had not received word that there was to be a conference; that Mrs. Ethel Epstein, the Mayor's labor secretary, had phoned Mike Quill at a time when every paper had carried the news that there was to be a Union meeting at the Windsor. Quill was at the meeting.

The Mayor's statement, made after he had conferred with Company officials and before he had spoken to Union leaders, was an early indication to the Union of which side he was on. Santo, Hogan and Quill met to discuss their answer. At 5:38 P.M. it was delivered by special messenger to the Mayor at the Hotel Roosevelt. The letter read:

Honorable Fiorello H. LaGuardia  
Mayor of the City of New York  
Roosevelt Hotel  
45th Street & Madison Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

March 8, 1941

Dear Mr. Mayor:

I have just read the statement which your Honor issued to the press this morning in regard to the dispute between the Transport

Workers Union of America and the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company. I hereby advise your Honor as follows:

The New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company are responsible for the strike which their 3,500 employees have voted for unanimously at special membership meetings held last night and this morning.

The companies did not negotiate in good faith with the union. Although the net profits of the New York City Omnibus Corporation have been and are more than \$2,000,000 a year, which represents an annual return of almost 100 per cent on the investment of its stockholders, it not only rejected all our demands for increases in wages, a uniform eight hour working day and improved working conditions, but had the audacity to suggest the elimination of sick leave and holidays with pay which were provided for in our previous contract.

So far as the Fifth Avenue Coach Company is concerned, the figures furnished us by the company itself show that in 1920 the stockholders had an equity of \$3,000,000, which by 1940 grew to \$10,000,000, notwithstanding that the company paid out \$9,500,000 in dividends to its stockholders at the rate of half a million dollars a year since 1922. During the same period wages have declined so that they are now three-quarters of a million dollars a year less than they were in 1929. And the company has proposed the further degradation of our conditions by suggesting a wage cut of approximately 4 cents an hour and the elimination of two-man operation of buses on which they received 10 cent fare.

If the companies' attitude has changed and they are now prepared to make reasonable counter-proposals, we shall be pleased to resume negotiations.

In view of the fact that the membership has voted for strike and our constitution provides that a strike may not be settled or "declared off" except by a majority vote of the membership, the strike will have to proceed. This should not, however, constitute an obstacle to the resumption of negotiations, as soon as the company convinces us by reasonable counter-proposals that it intends to negotiate in good faith.

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) Michael J. Quill

President

This letter was the first sent out from Transport Workers Hall during the controversy. It is important to note that thus early the Union took a firm stand on "reasonable counter-proposals" by the companies as a basis for resumption of negotiations.

The companies, the Mayor had pointed out, were ready to negotiate. The Union, in this reply, said, we're ready too, we're not shutting the door tight against negotiations. The *New York Times* in its story the following day even went so far as to say that the letter "left the door open for settlement of the controversy without resort to strike."

But the Mayor either could not or would not see the open door. He attacked the Union officials:

I advise the union to call off this strike, resume negotiations with the companies or submit the matter to arbitration. It is deplorable and regrettable that the officials of the union assume a threatening and defiant attitude. The insistence upon striking is a defiant refusal to mediate or arbitrate. The responsibility now rests entirely with the union officials. The company representatives personally assured me this morning of their willingness to mediate or arbitrate and came to City Hall. The union officials refused to come at my invitation.

To the last sentence in this letter Union officials gave a short pungent reply: "It's not true. We have not received an invitation."

In the evening the Union notified the companies of its contemplated action on Monday, in a telegram quoting the text of the strike resolution adopted by the membership.

The Strike Committee, enlarged by the addition of hundreds of trusted active Union men, met continuously with Kearns, discussing strategy. Plans were suggested, revised, brought to Quill, Santo, Hogan, MacMahon and the other leaders, approved or disapproved.

A few cots were carried into the building and distributed in various rooms. They were little used that Saturday night.

# SUNDAY, MARCH 9

Captain James Harten, personal aide to the Mayor, arrived at Union headquarters at 12:20 P.M. He brought the following letter:

CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Mr. Michael J. Quill,  
Transport Workers Union of America  
153 West 64th Street  
New York City

March 9, 1941

Dear Sir:

Once more I want to inform you, and through you, the membership of your Union, that the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company are ready and willing to continue negotiations to mediate or arbitrate a new agreement, and pending that, continue the existing agreement. That being so, there is no justification for calling a strike and interrupting bus service in the Boroughs served by these two companies.

The interest of the men, many of whom have long service, the convenience of the public and the advantages and terms gained by the Union in its existing contract should not be jeopardized. There is no good, sound or justifiable reason for calling a strike and interrupting service. Again you are informed that the companies are ready to meet your representatives of the Union either in my office or any other place of mutual convenience.

I must inform you that the threats of terror and violence as reported in this morning's issue of the *Herald Tribune* cannot and will not be ignored. The responsibility will be fixed should there be any violence at any time anywhere.

I again appeal to you on behalf not only of the convenience of the traveling public, but of your own men not to make the tragic mistake of unnecessarily calling these men on strike. You can reach me by 'phone all day or any time during the night if you are ready to resume negotiations and postpone a strike.

Yours very truly,

(signed) F. H. LaGuardia

Mayor

The threats of terror and violence to which the Mayor referred were supposedly made by Matt Kearns at the Union meeting on Saturday. The *Herald Tribune* had quoted him as saying: "We'll show this town a party that they have not seen since 1916. We're greater than any tin-pot Mayor or anybody else. If Mr. LaGuardia thinks he's going to pull a blitzkrieg we'll handle him too. We'll strike first and negotiate afterward."

The *Herald Tribune* reported further: "'What about scabs?' shouted one of the 3,000 union members in the hall.

"'We've got a couple of rivers in New York,' replied Mr. Kearns. 'We'll use 'em, if necessary.'"

Union officials were pulled out of conference with the Strike Committee to discuss the Mayor's letter. Then they drafted a reply in which the Union again asserted its willingness to resume negotiations immediately, as soon as the companies "show us a sign of their good faith by submitting reasonable counter-proposals." The full text of the letter from Quill to the Mayor read:

March 9, 1941

Honorable Fiorello H. LaGuardia  
Mayor of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York City

Dear Mr. Mayor:

The contents of your Honor's letter has just been communicated to me and I hasten to send you this reply.

In the letter which I sent your Honor yesterday I made it clear that the New York City Omnibus and Fifth Avenue Coach Companies must shoulder the responsibility for the strike which has been voted for unanimously by their 3500 employees because they negotiated with us in bad faith.

In respect to the New York City Omnibus Corporation, I stated in my letter that although it has been enjoying net profits at the rate of more than \$2,000,000 per year, which represents a return of almost 100 per cent each year on its invested capital, it has not only rejected all our demands, but has demanded the elimina-

tion of sick leave and holidays with pay which were provided for in the agreement that expired on February 28th.

Concerning Fifth Avenue Coach Company, I pointed out that its stockholders had an equity of \$3,000,000 in 1920 which by 1940 had grown to \$10,000,000, notwithstanding the payment to them during the same period of \$9,500,000 in the form of annual dividends at the rate of \$500,000 per year from 1922 to 1940 inclusive. Wages, however, have been reduced by three-quarters of \$1,000,000 since 1929. And in the course of negotiations the company proposed further drastic wage cuts by suggesting a reduction of approximately 4 cents an hour in present rates and the elimination of two-man operation of buses on which it collects a 10 cent fare.

As I said in my letter yesterday, notwithstanding the bad faith heretofore shown by these companies, we shall be pleased to resume negotiations with them immediately if they will first show us a sign of their good faith by submitting reasonable counter-proposals.

I suggest, therefore, that your Honor might more properly request the companies to provide the basis for the resumption of negotiations.

As for your Honor's fear of violence, let me assure you that there will be none. Perhaps your Honor's mind would have been more at ease on this score had you read today's *New York Times* instead of the *Herald Tribune*, which had no reporter at Saturday morning's meeting. I invite your Honor's attention to the following which appears on page 37 in today's *New York Times*:

"Mr. Quill cautioned the busmen against any violence or improper conduct either before or during the strike, warning them that the Union would tolerate no violence or damage to any company property. The same admonition was given by Mr. Hogan. All employees of the two companies were ordered to remain on their jobs until the official strike call was issued and to perform their duties in workmanlike fashion, with all regard to public convenience and safety."

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) Michael J. Quill  
President

Those members of the Union who were not already aware that the press was going to "do a job on them" could have guessed it from the way this exchange of letters was handled in the newspapers. Every paper either ran the full text or quoted lengthy extracts from the Mayor's letter to Quill, but *no paper, with the single exception of the Daily Worker, quoted Quill's reply in full.* The best that it got was a summary or a quoted paragraph or two.

Neither *The Times* nor the *Herald Tribune* printed the paragraph from Quill's letter which charged that the *Herald Tribune* had no reporter at the meeting. Nor did either paper reprint the paragraph from *The Times*, cited by Quill, which showed that the Union members had been cautioned against violence by both Hogan and Quill. There was a conspiracy of silence about that paragraph.

But overplaying the statements of the Mayor and the companies, and underplaying those of the Union, was a comparatively minor phase of the campaign waged by the newspapers against the TWU. There is more to that story which will be told later.

Although Quill's letter got such scant attention from the press, it was read in full over the radio. And thereby, too, hangs a tale.

A few minutes after 5:00 P.M. an official of another union phoned Transport Workers Hall to inform Mike Quill that he had just heard the Mayor's letter to Quill broadcast over WNYC, the municipal station.

It was true. Twice during the afternoon, programs were interrupted with the announcement: "Here's an important message by Mayor LaGuardia to Mr. Michael Quill, President of the Transport Workers Union." According to Mr. Edward Goldberger, continuity writer for the station, the letter was read at the request of the Mayor.

Under the rules of the Federal Communications Commission private messages may not be broadcast. Saul Mills pointed this out to WNYC authorities and demanded that, in all fairness, Quill's reply to the Mayor be broadcast, too. At 6:55 P.M., five minutes before the station went off the air, he won his point—Quill's reply was read.

But the Mayor had the final say on Sunday. In an interview that

evening he told reporters: "They just want to strike. They refuse to arbitrate even though officials of the bus companies are willing to extend the present contract. The union's attitude seems to me to be bull-headed, obstinate, and stupid."

After this outburst, even the most devoted admirer of Mr. LaGuardia need not have waited for the *World-Telegram* to tell him the next day that "The Mayor indicated his sympathies were more with the management than the strikers. . . ."

Carrying on a correspondence with the Mayor was important but easy compared to the less spectacular and more difficult job of organizing the conduct of the strike. Union leaders at Transport Workers Hall had a few hours left to do a job that under the best circumstances would require many days. But they did it. Few strikes anywhere have ever been so well-organized as this one.

The Strike Committee knew that after the walkout on Monday it would have to be in constant touch with all the garages. So empty stores nearby were hired and chairs and tables put in; in some cases verbal agreements were made with restaurants that the workers were in the habit of frequenting. Phones were put in everywhere possible; where this was not possible arrangements were made to use the phones in drug stores, tobacco shops, coffee pots, etc. Six men were assigned to every phone so there would be continuous service twenty-four hours around. Extra phones were installed at Transport Workers Hall. And all incoming calls from the outside phone stations were to be routed immediately either to Room B, where John Keane and Dan Rauhauser were to handle everything pertaining to Fifth Avenue Coach, or to Matt's room where Jack Betwinek and Jack Lambe were to take care of Omnibus problems.

If there were any scabs next morning, if cops chased pickets, if more pickets were needed, if trouble of any kind developed—anywhere—the set-up was such that headquarters would be informed instantaneously.

Picketing plans were carefully laid, too. A master chart was drawn and on it all major points were indicated. All the men's names were on the chart—at the points to which they were to be assigned. A plan was worked out for the registration and assign-

ment of pickets on the first day. Every man was to come to Transport Workers Hall with his Union book. There he would be directed to the auditorium where nine tables were set up—four for each section of Fifth Avenue and five for each section of Omnibus. The striker was to go to the proper table and exchange his membership book for a picket card, then wait for his assignment. The picket cards printed on Sunday and all ready for distribution on Monday morning looked like this:

TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION  
OF GREATER NEW YORK

**PICKET CARD**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Badge \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Section No. \_\_\_\_\_ Bk. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Garage \_\_\_\_\_

Issued By \_\_\_\_\_

DATE	LOCATION	HRS.	PICKET CAPTAIN

426

Thousands of picket signs were ordered. A check of workers with cars was made to arrange for the distribution of the signs and to ride about the city carrying Union officials on tours of inspection.

For the information of the strikers, a strike notice was composed and thousands mimeographed to be distributed with the strike call. Only a handful of people saw the strike call in preparation because part of the strategy was to keep the exact hour of the walkout secret until a few moments before the final deadline.

All these details and a hundred others were arranged by Matt Kearns and his Strike Committee in constant consultation with

Union officials in the rapidly disappearing minutes of Sunday night. The planning and the checking and the effective carrying out of the plans were a joint effort. James Blanchard, Omnibus driver, who was on the Committee and didn't shut an eye for two days and three nights, described the process: "It was a case of an emergency springing up and we had to figure out some way, so we all put our heads together and figured out this formula."

The events of the next day proved that the formula worked to perfection.

# Chapter VII: Diary of the Strike

## MONDAY, MARCH 10

*The First Day* Ordinarily Hugh O'Connor opens his little candy and soda booth in the entrance to Transport Workers Hall about 8:30 A.M. But this morning he was behind his counter at 2:45 A.M. The soft-spoken, gray-haired, big-boned veteran of the motormen's and switchmen's 1926 strike on the IRT had a hunch that things were going to pop early.

They did. Everything was ready. Santo, Hogan, and Quill were giving their last-minute instructions at a 2:30 meeting of section officers, stewards, and key members of the Union. Appointments to the various posts were announced—picket captains, telephone men, registrars, field men.

One final word by Matt Kearns:

This meeting is of historical importance. The struggle will be of a clear-cut nature. Our contract demands have been reasonable. . . . The Company's counter proposals are a challenge to labor and particularly to our Union. . . .

The enemy is attempting, and will attempt, to create division and disunity in our ranks. It has failed and will fail. . . .

Our Union will be attacked now from all sides. We must remember that the success of our struggle—our discipline—will depend, as Hogan has said, upon cool heads and stout hearts.

This may not be a struggle of short duration. But whether it is for three days, three weeks, or six months we will fight it through. . . .

Come what may, we will never let anything or anyone, whatever they may do, weaken our determination to win better contracts—better working conditions—and a decent American standard of living.

Officers, stewards, and key men of Omnibus and Fifth Avenue Coach—this struggle must end in victory! Victory will come to us if we remain united.

The honesty and integrity of our leaders has been proven in the past. They have brought our Union safely through many struggles. Whatever may come—they will not fail us now.

There are some things I want to emphasize. I expect every man to cover the post he is assigned to . . . to remain there and keep on the alert at all times . . . to refuse to be drawn into discussions or arguments with strangers . . . refuse to accept drink from anyone . . . obey all the orders of your picket captains and section officers . . . obey all the orders of the Police Department. Don't give anyone an excuse to say that we are not behaving ourselves as good Union men should—in a peaceful, law-abiding way. We are fighting for our homes—for the security of our wives and families. Keeping that in mind, no thugs or scabs will break our ranks.

Our unity and solidarity are our strength. Stand firm—and we will win.

When he had finished, Matt asked the group to swear not to drink until the strike was over. They all arose to a man and took the pledge.

It was 4:30 A.M. Now for the first time, as the men were given their bundles of strike calls, was the exact hour of the walkout made known—even to this group of insiders. They filed out of the meeting room, found the cars assigned to them waiting outside, and sped away to their respective posts. At the same moment the newspapers were notified of the exact time through Austin Hogan's release to the press:

The New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company having failed to make any offer whatsoever in response to their employees' just demands for wage increases, shorter hours and other necessary improvements in working conditions; and, in accordance with the unanimous mandate of these

employees, the Transport Workers Union has declared a strike affecting all surface transit lines and properties operated by the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company effective at 5 A.M., Monday, March 10th, 1941. . . .

Not a single passenger will be stranded. . . . Our men have specific instructions that at the time the strike goes into effect they are to deliver all passengers en route to their respective destinations and return the bus only after all passengers have been properly discharged.

This will be a 100 per cent effective strike. There will be no violence. We do not expect the companies to attempt operation of the buses with strike-breakers. There will be no scabs.

We regret the inconvenience to the public. We regret that the companies have forced this strike action upon their employees, instead of choosing the peaceful, reasonable and American way of settlement through negotiation. . . .

We shall be pleased to meet and negotiate settlement of the



*Courtesy PM*

Distributing picket signs for delivery to garages and terminals.

strike and a new agreement just as soon as the companies come forward with a reasonable counter-proposal to the demands of their employees.

At 5:00 A.M. every garage, terminal, and depot had its picket line.

First OK report to headquarters came in on the dot of five from the huge garage at 54th Street and Ninth Avenue which houses the buses of Omnibus, Fifth Avenue, Baltimore and Ohio, and Gray Line companies. Matt Kearns pulled this garage himself because of the special circumstances which permitted B. & O. and Gray Line buses to continue operations.

The Union contract with the Gray Line had not expired—the Union was honoring its agreement. The Fifth Avenue Coach Company loans drivers to the B. & O. and these drivers, too, were to continue working. Kearns told the foreman at the garage that he was going to allow a skeleton crew of mechanics, cleaners, shifters (men who shift the buses upstairs after the drivers run them into the garage) and elevator men, to handle the Gray Line and B. & O. buses.

He had no trouble with the foreman. His trouble came in getting the drivers to understand that it was all right for them to cross the picket line. They didn't want to cross it. Matt explained to them that the Union wanted them to cross the line, that theirs was an exceptional case. Nevertheless, for the duration of the strike these drivers stopped their buses, going out and coming in, to check with the picket captain for his OK.

Jack Betwinek, Omnibus operator, who was at the headquarters phone handling all incoming Omnibus calls, kept a log of the reports:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Condition</i>
5:00 A.M.	54th St. & 9th Ave.	Powell, phone man	OK
5:01 A.M.	102nd St.	Herbert, phone man	OK
5:05 A.M.	23rd St. & Ave. A	Eddy Kenny, captain	OK
5:08 A.M.	22nd St. garage	Udowitz, phone man	1 run to come in
5:10 A.M.	100th St. garage	Barney O'Leary, phoned man	100 per cent closed
5:13 A.M.	15th St. & Ave. A	Sirico, phone man	1 night hawk to come in
5:15 A.M.	Grogan, organizer	Call from ST 9-8429	Will stay there
5:20 A.M.	11th St. garage	John Kelly	1 to come in
5:21 A.M.	146th St. garage	Jerry O'Leary	Police sgt. allows 12 pickets only
5:35 A.M.	34th St. & 1st Ave.	Pastorelli	100 per cent closed

From these early reports and similar ones called in to the Fifth Avenue phone man, it was evident that everything was going off without a hitch. The six to twelve policemen detailed to every garage, terminal, and depot had nothing to do. They had arrived with their nightsticks in their hands; they soon put the clubs away in the large slash-pockets of their overcoats. There was no disorder anywhere. The strikers had read carefully and were following the instructions on the strike notices which had been given to them with the strike call:

## NOTICE!

### TO ALL MEMBERS ON STRIKE!!

This strike was called by unanimous vote of the membership in the New York City Omnibus and Fifth Avenue Coach Branches to enforce your demands for higher wages and better working conditions in your job and for greater security for yourselves and your families.

To ensure victory, every man must do his part. Carry out every duty assigned to you with discipline and diligence. Obey all orders of your picket captains. Do your duty to yourself, your fellow workers and your Union.

You will receive instructions throughout the strike. The first steps to be taken the first day are as follows:

1. Be sure you have your Union book with you and exchange it for a picket card at Transport Hall *the first day* of the strike and that you have this picket card on your person until it is exchanged for your Union book.
2. Be sure to wear Your Uniform whenever on picket duty or any other strike activity. Shop employees may wear either their work or civilian clothes.
3. Be sure to wear the Union Button at all times.

Conduct yourself on the picket line and at all other times and places as a decent citizen and responsible Union man. Disregard all rumors, unauthorized instructions or unofficial reports. Do not

talk to strangers, except to inform them there is a strike and what substitute facilities they may take. Refer all newspaper men and other persons making inquiries to Union Headquarters.

Above all, do not tolerate any breach of discipline, evasion of duty or violation of Union honor.

Stand firm! With determination and unity in our ranks we are invincible! We are marching for a great victory for organized transit labor!

Matthias Kearns  
General Organizer  
Fifth Avenue Coach Branch  
and NYC Omnibus Branch

March 10, 1941

Issued from Strike Headquarters, Transport Hall, 153 West 64th St. Telephone: TRafalgar 4-3200—Continuous service throughout strike.

At 6:30 A.M. Union leaders returned to headquarters from their inspection tour of the garages and terminals. "Everything is in fine shape," said Quill.

In the auditorium downstairs men were streaming in to register, pick up their picket cards, and get their assignments. Within twelve hours after the issue of the strike call all Union membership books had been exchanged for picket cards. By the time most of the traveling public had arrived on the streets all terminals, intersections, and important bus stops were covered by pickets carrying signs directing people to the nearest substitute facilities. The morning rush hour found the subways, trolleys and elevated trains jammed as never before.

The record snowfall of Friday and Saturday added to the difficulties of travel—Mr. LaGuardia's Sanitation Department was still gambling on the sun to get rid of the slush.

Thirty-one bus routes—two in Queens, the rest in Manhattan—were affected. Over their 132 miles, close to 900,000 passengers were carried daily in the 254 Fifth Avenue Coach and 840 Omnibus Company buses. Ninety-five per cent of the bus service in Manhattan was suspended; the other 5 per cent, furnished by other companies, was not on strike. Particularly hard hit were the patrons

*Wide World*

**First morning: Lenox Avenue and 146th Street.**

of the eleven struck Manhattan crosstown lines, for which the only substitute service was taxicab or private car.

Picket lines grew larger during the day as members from the IRT, BMT, Independent, Third Avenue Railways, and other branches volunteered their help on their way to and from their work and during their lunch hour. In the shopping area from Broadway to Fifth Avenue, and 34th Street to 42nd Street, members of the TWU Ladies' Auxiliary organized a roving picket line.

The strike was completely effective. The strikers were perfectly well-behaved. This was apparent to every one.

Nevertheless, the daily attack by the Mayor came with its accustomed regularity following his morning conference with Mr. Ritchie and Boykin K. Wright, counsel for the companies. "They informed the Mayor that they now consider the agreement that expired as entirely terminated, and that negotiations, when resumed, would have to be on an entirely new basis," Mr. LaGuardia

declared. "I requested the gentlemen to please keep their original offer of willingness to continue the present agreement in full force and effect pending negotiations or mediation, at least for twenty-four hours.

"They have consented to do so, and I sincerely hope now that everyone will see how useless and unnecessary it is to keep the men on strike and have them lose wages, jeopardize what has been gained in the existing agreement, inconvenience the public, when the same results, if not better, can be obtained by returning to work and starting to negotiate."

At 11:30 A.M., from Transport Workers Hall, Austin Hogan issued a statement reaffirming the Union's previous position on negotiations:

The sincerity of purpose of the 3500 employees has already been demonstrated by the strike which is 100% effective.

A strike so effective must necessarily seriously inconvenience the million passengers who use these bus lines daily. We sincerely regret this hardship to the people.

We are therefore prepared to sit down with the companies whenever they signify their intention to negotiate in good faith by making us a reasonable offer. . . .

Meanwhile, pickets were marching, men were reporting for duty, Union trouble-shooters were watching bars along all routes, and phone men were calling in regularly to headquarters. The nature of their reports had changed—they were no longer saying that the garages were closed, since everyone knew that. But other things had to be taken care of as a page out of Betwinek's logbook shows:

12:20 P.M.—Udowitz phoned in—what to do about Texaco Gasoline truck about to deliver gas at 22nd St. Garage? Instructed driver of truck he couldn't deliver. Driver replied "O.K., Boy," and drove away.

12:40 P.M.—Called 100th St. Gar., 146th St. Gar., 54th St. Garage, 12th St. Gar. P. Captains and notified them not to allow any gasoline or oil deliveries.

12:53 P.M.—O'Mealy 22nd St. Garage reported gas truck trying to deliver gas. Instructed O'Mealy to stop driver. Waiting for return call.

1:00 P.M.—O'Mealy reports from 22nd St.—Truck driver delivered load of gas.

1:40 P.M.—Vosberg 100th St. Garage. Phoned that Texaco truck pulled in to deliver gas—saw picket line and pulled away again without delivering gas.

At 5:15 P.M. Mike Quill gave an interview to the press. The questions and answers cleared up one point on which there had been much confusion. The Mayor had, on several occasions, intimated that the Union officials had refused to come to City Hall to talk things over. Part of the transcript of the press interview shows the Union position on that question:

*Question.* The Mayor stated that he had invited you to City Hall. He called on Saturday and could not get you. Said he wanted you to see him.

*Answer.* To date we have received no request from the Mayor to come to City Hall.

*Q.* How about the public request?

*A.* Nor do we know of any such request having been made publicly.

*Q.* If the Mayor invited you down to City Hall, irrespective of what for, would you go?

*A.* If the Mayor invited me with the Union committee I would go, but not alone. I have no authority to go alone.

*Q.* You mean the executive committee?

*A.* I mean our negotiating committee. Hogan, Sacher, Santo and the others.

*Q.* What is the next step?

*A.* We don't know. We are preparing for a long drawn out fight, and our men are 100 per cent solid. We feel that our demands are fully justified in consideration of the rising cost of living, with

prices shooting sky high, and with the company showing a profit of \$2,038,000.

The opening barrage in the offensive of the companies against the Union (apart from the series of flank attacks by the Mayor) was a shower of full-page ads in all the afternoon papers, except *PM*, which takes no ads. The demands of the TWU were labeled CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY! and the responsibility for the walk-out was laid to the Union officials. It was a cleverly-written document which, by stressing the annual earnings of the workers without mentioning the length of their working day, was calculated to swing the public to the Company side.

Perhaps the best commentary on the companies' tactic of buying full-page ads of this kind can be found in a book by Alexander M. Bing, entitled *War-Time Strikes and Their Adjustment*, published in 1921. Mr. Bing was a dollar-a-year man during the last war serving with the Shipping Board and the Ordnance Department. He was an employer of labor with many years of business experience. In his discussion of a strike on the Kansas City Railways Company in war time he wrote: "The newspaper advertisements published by the company at the time of the second strike entitled 'A Strike Against the Community' are excellent examples of the manner in which a public service corporation can trade upon the necessity of its service to the public, in order to fight a legitimate wage demand of its men."

The first and last paragraphs of the ad seem designed to serve the purpose of alienating the men and the public from the leadership of the Union. It couldn't, of course, work with the men because they knew that the statements contained in the two paragraphs were untrue. The demands had not been framed by the leaders—they were the product of two months of discussion by the membership in section meetings. Following the preliminary negotiations with the companies the Union officials had merely to report back the companies' counter-offer of cuts, one-man operation of some buses, elimination of sick leave—and the strike vote was inevitable.

All these things the men knew. The ad, therefore, served only to make them bitter against the companies, and to indicate that the strike would not end as quickly as some had anticipated.

# If you had to walk today...

## AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS

Fifth Avenue Coach Company  
Employees for 1940:

Drivers . . . . . \$2,876.44  
Conductors . . . . . 1,936.54  
All others:  
skilled and  
unskilled . . . . . 1,676.63

# BLAME THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION!

## AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS

New York City Omnibus  
Corporation Employees  
for 1940:

Drivers . . . . . \$2,126.51  
All others:  
skilled and  
unskilled . . . . . 1,909.22

**DON'T BLAME THE MEN WHO MAN THE BUSES FOR MAKING YOU WALK**  
The officials of the T. W. U. initiated on this strike. They, not our men... are responsible for it.  
We question whether all the facts were laid before the men prior to the strike vote.

**DON'T BLAME THE BUS COMPANIES FOR MAKING YOU WALK**

We have done our best to avoid this strike.

We've been bargaining collectively with T. W. U. and have operated under a closed shop for three and a half years! Before this strike was called we offered the union officials three separate ways to keep our buses running and our men employed:

### 1. WE OFFERED TO MEDiate.

This is the method provided by the laws of the State of New York to protect you, the public, against the incineration of a strike.

### 2. WE OFFERED TO ARBITRATE.

In other words we offered to give the whole question in the hands of any qualified, impartial third party.

### 3. WE OFFERED TO EXTEND THE EXISTING CONTRACTS FOR 24, 48, 60 OR 90 DAYS, 60 WHATEVER TIME WAS NECESSARY TO WORK OUT ANY DIFFERENCES.

THE EXISTING CONTRACTS WHICH WE OFFERED TO EXTEND ARE THE VERY SAME CONTRACTS WHICH THE TRANSPORT WORKERS BULLETIN, THE GLOBE AND PAPER, PRAISED IN THESE GLOWING TERMS WHEN THEY WERE SIGNED IN 1938.

(The Fifth Avenue Coach Company Contract)

"Officers of the Local Union and of the Sections, in the general meeting which ratified the agreement and in subsequent section meetings, have given thorough explanations of the new rates and other features of the agreement, WHICH IS CONSIDERED BY EVERYBODY AS ONE OF THE UNION'S FINEST ACHIEVEMENTS IN VIEW OF THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE COMPANY."

(The New York City Omnibus Corporation Contract)

"The Transport Workers Union established THE HIGHEST HOURLY RATES and won many outstanding improvements for the two thousand members... A rise of one cent an hour brought the top rate for drivers up to 86 cents, THE HIGHEST IN THE U.S. FOR SUCH TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION, and corresponding increases were won for all other operators and garage employees."

THE T. W. U. WOULD NOT BE REASONABLE NEGOTIATORS! THEY REFUSED, EVER FOR A SHORT TIME TO EXTEND THE CONTRACTS THEY PRAISED AS ABOUT ONLY TWO YEARS AGO!

THEY INSISTED ON HAVING A STRIKE. THEY HAVE THEIR STRIKE:

## AND YOU WALK!

WHAT DOES T. W. U. DEMAND OF US?

THIS IS WHAT THEY DEMAND!

For 1940 the Fifth Avenue Coach Company suffered a loss of \$160,000.00 (from operation). It had an income from investments of \$225,000.00. Its fixed net income was \$65,000.00.

The union demands mill for increases amounting to \$1,240,000.00 a year.

We don't know how to pay \$1,240,000.00 more each year out of \$65,000.00. And union officials have been unable to show us how.

As to the New York City Omnibus Corporation, the union's demands would amount to a sum larger than the total net earnings of the company for 1940.

There's a lesson for that sort of thing—**CONSERVATION OF PROPERTY!**

The average yearly wages of our employees are higher, by a large margin, than the average annual wages paid by any other bus company operating in the City of New York or in the United States. They are higher than the average annual wages paid by any other industry that we know of. Yet other industries, unlike ourselves, are not bound by a fixed fare and can increase the price to the consumer of their product or service.

### COMPARE THESE FIGURES:

Average Annual Wage for Employees

Largest Automobile Manufacturer (Regularly employed Hours by Paid Employees in 1940).....\$1,804.00

Average Annual Wage for Employees

Dodge's Aircraft Company (Year Ended Nov. 30, 1940).....\$1,614.00

Average Annual Wage for Employees

Fifth Avenue Coach Company in 1940.....\$1,936.54

Average Annual Wage for Employees

New York City Omnibus Corporation in 1940.....\$2,126.51

### NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THIS:

The T. W. U. demands wage increases ranging from 25% to 45% for all drivers, wage increases ranging from 15% to 37% for all mechanics.

The T. W. U. now demands three weeks' vacation a year with pay!

How many of you bus riders enjoy more than the two weeks' vacation with pay which we now give our employees?

T. W. U. demands, in addition to these three weeks, eight fully paid holidays a year—four more than they are now getting. This practically amounts to a total of more than four weeks' vacation a year with pay.

T. W. U. demands that pay be allowed certain employees for cashing their pay checks at neighboring banks and elsewhere.

T. W. U. demands that large and increased cash sums for sick benefits (beginning with the first day of sickness) BE DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO RULES TO BE MADE BY THE UNION AND WITHOUT ELIM

THERE ARE ONLY A FEW OF THE LONG LIST OF DEMANDS... DEMANDS WHICH TOTAL A RUDDY HIGHER FIGURE THAN THE COMBINED EARNINGS OF BOTH BUS COMPANIES.

ALL THIS IN THE FACE OF RUDDY LIES AND THE SIMPLE FACT THAT WE CANNOT PAY THE PRICE OF A BUS RIDE TO MEET ANY SUCH DEMANDS.

(Our prices is fixed by law. It is the nickel you pay on the fareward line, the dime you pay on the top-seat line.)

T. W. U. MAKES THESE FANTASTIC DEMANDS. T. W. U. REFUSES TO SUBMIT THESE DEMANDS TO MEDIATION OR TO AN IMPARTIAL ARBITRATOR AS WE HAVE OFFERED TO DO.

WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO ALL THIS?

THERE IS ONLY ONE FAIR AND HONEST ANSWER!

THE ENTIRE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DISCONFORT AND THE INCONVENIENCE TO YOU, THE BUS-RIDING PUBLIC, YES, AND THE LOSS OF WAGES TO OUR MEN, RESTS SQUARELY ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE OFFICIALS OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION AND ON THEIRS ALONE.

FIFTH AVENUE COACH CO. • NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORP. • (31 Manhattan Bus Lines)

11:00 P.M.—Flash to headquarters! Picket captain reports trouble . . . Edward Constadter, Section 503, Fifth Avenue Coach, has been on the line for 16 hours. Refuses to be relieved. What shall I do?

12:00 P.M.—Everything O.K. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 11

*The Second Day* Another deluge of full-page company ads in all the morning papers except the *Daily Worker*. Maybe it's too simple to suggest it was cause and effect, but the companies got back, in venomous editorials denouncing the strike and the Union leadership, much more than the ads cost. Even those who, through long experience in the labor movement, had become hardened to the anti-union bias of publishers were surprised by the frenzied tone of the attack on TWU officials.

The *Daily Mirror* editorial is not a fair sample since it was easily the most vicious, but it does give an idea of the line followed by all the others:

### A RED QUILL IN THE SIDE OF N. Y.

Some 800,000 New Yorkers were left in slushy streets yesterday, to get to their destinations and back as best they could, by a strike which met the dawn.

It was the boldest and most brazen demonstration of Communist tactics ever known in this city.

The Transport Workers Union is a Communist-dominated, Moscow-directed outfit. . . .

The head of this union is Michael Quill. Quill, who accepted the hospitality of the United States, coming here from his native land, has been a Communist agitator, a disorderly trouble-maker and a radical organizer almost from the day that his foot landed on the friendly soil of the United States.

This is the man who had the impertinence last Saturday, when called on the telephone by the Mayor of New York City, to send word throughout the day that "Mr. Quill cannot be disturbed for anyone or anything." Mayor LaGuardia, who is known to bend backwards for the rights—and often for the wrongs—of Labor, said:

"The transport workers are bull-headed, obstinate and stupid. . . . They just want to strike. . . ."

The *World-Telegram* ran the *Mirror* a close second. The strike

was only in its second day and already the *Telegram* had its finger on the pulse of the public!

. . . the public, we think, sharply disagrees with Quill and emphatically agrees with Mayor LaGuardia, who knows all the issues involved, that the union leader's attitude is "bullheaded, obstinate, and stupid."

Nobody can call the Mayor a foe of unions. He has conferred with both sides in the bus dispute. . . .

The great service which Mr. LaGuardia performed for the companies is revealed in both these editorials. Practically every other paper picked up his "bullheaded, obstinate, and stupid" quotation and used it in the same way. The "Red" issue and the "friend of labor" theme were played so similarly by the papers that all the editorials might have been written by the same person.

But smearing and slandering were not enough for the great metropolitan press. Several of the papers resorted to outright brazen misstatements. The last sentence in the *Telegram* editorial quoted above is an example. It was simply not true that the Mayor had "conferred with both sides in the bus dispute." He had not conferred with Union representatives at all—as the *Telegram* editorial writer could have discovered by reading the news accounts in his own paper.

The 3500 strikers and 1000 other Union members who jammed the Windsor for a big noon rally made it very clear that the combined attack of press and Mayor had not dampened their spirit in the slightest. It was obvious that their morale was of the highest. Quill, the main target of the attack, got a five-minute ovation. All the leaders were roundly cheered. The smear-slander-lie tactic had boomeranged. Instead of making for disunity, it had made for greater unity.

It was designed to arouse the anger of the workers against their leaders. It did arouse the anger of the workers—against the press. Reporters, seated at the press table before the officers appeared on the stage, were baited and jeered. Loud shouts of "Throw the *Mirror* out" and "Throw the *Mirror* reporter out" were accompanied by showers of tabloids torn to bits like confetti. The idea

caught on in the balcony. The hall was taking on the appearance of a snowfall when Union officials appeared and called the meeting to order.

Chairman Hogan explained that the reporters were not necessarily responsible for the news slant or editorial policies of newspapers. "Most working newspapermen," he said, "are members of the Guild which is part of the CIO.

"Our resentment, our just resentment, should not be turned against our working brothers but against the bloated bankers and capitalists who own the newspapers."

This observation, greeted with shouts of approval, had the effect of softening the personal reproaches. But every mention of the press thereafter brought louder and more boisterous demonstrations. It was plain that the strikers were putting on a show for the press table—giving the reporters their answer to the attack by the press.

When John Santo, in a fighting speech blasting the companies for their ads and the press for their lies, said, "The newspapers are trying to prove that we are not peaceful and disciplined," a striker yelled, "We have proved that we are." And they had—as the owner of the bar in a hotel in the Seventeenth Congressional District might have testified that very afternoon. A group of strikers had insisted that his bar be closed on the ground that this was Election Day (there was a special Congressional election that day in the Seventeenth District). The bar was closed.

The strikers hung on every word as Santo made clear the complicated financial structure of the companies; as Sacher traced their effort to shift the blame for the strike to the TWU; and as Kearns reported on the 100 per cent effectiveness of the walkout.

Mrs. Mollie Grogan, Ladies' Auxiliary member and wife of organizer Bill Grogan, gave a short talk so sincere and so heartfelt that some of the audience were moved to tears, including a few hard-boiled reporters: "We want higher wages for our men and the eight-hour day so we can become acquainted with our husbands. We want the things that America can give us." She meant it.

Mike Quill, in the closing speech, reminded the audience of the deadline which had been passed at the hour the meeting

opened: "We'll continue Ritchie's deadline from one day to the other, from one week to the other, from one month to the other if it's necessary. There is only one deadline for us—the deadline of a signed contract."

The meeting was over. The strikers left the hall to return to their posts.

They had been informed by mimeographed notices distributed the evening before of a change in picketing procedure which saved them the trouble of first reporting to headquarters each day. The notice below went to Fifth Avenue Coach strikers; there were similar ones for the Omnibus group.

### TO ALL MEMBERS OF 5TH AVE. COACH

By decision of the Strike Committee, all members of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company branch are to follow these rules beginning Tuesday, March 11th:

1. All members are to report to the garage at the time they would report under ordinary circumstances, and present their picket cards to the captain in charge.
2. Members are to proceed promptly to the point designated by the captain in charge and to remain there until relieved.
3. Section officers have the right to switch strikers' hours of picketing duty as and when deemed necessary.
4. All orders are to be obeyed and when any member believes them to be unfair or unjust, he should make a complaint after performing the assigned task.

One of the tasks assigned to all strikers was the distribution of 500,000 copies of the Union's answer to the paid ad of the companies. The newspaper *PM*, lonely dissenter (with the *Daily Worker*) from the press chorus of hate and abuse, offered the union a full page free for reproduction of its leaflet. (See page 64.)

The distribution of leaflets to the public was one way of bringing the Union side to the men and women and their families who make up the city of New York. Another effective way was to enlist the support of the CIO Greater New York Industrial Union Council. The two hundred union locals which comprise the Coun-

# If You Had to Walk Today-- BLAINE JOHNA. RITCHIE

In paid advertisements published yesterday in various New York City newspapers, the management of the New York City Omnibus Corporation and Fifth Avenue Coach Company said:

"The entire responsibility for the discomfort and the inconvenience to you, the bus-riding public, yes, and the loss of wages to our men, rests squarely on the shoulders of the officials of the Transport Workers Union and on theirs alone."

In April, 1939, however, John A. Ritchie, then president and now chairman of the board of directors of both companies, in his annual report to the stockholders of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company had this to say concerning the same officials of the Transport Workers Union:

"It would be decidedly unfair to fail to state that while the representatives of the Transport Workers Union urged vigorously the granting of the demands which they had made on behalf of the men and which were modified during the course of negotiations, THEY GLADLY DEVOTED A GREAT DEAL OF TIME AND PATIENCE TO HONEST AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF ARGUMENTS AND ANALYTICAL STUDIES PRESENTED BY YOUR MANAGEMENT."

Mr. Ritchie took occasion in the same report not only to commend these officials for their patience, honesty and seriousness in the negotiation of our contracts, but for the constructive contribution toward safe, efficient and courteous service. Thus he said:

"Therefore, recognizing and accepting fully the responsibility of the union itself and the responsibility of the individual employees toward the riding public, including visitors to the World's Fair, the officials of the Transport Workers Union promptly and most vigorously launched a campaign among transit workers of Greater New York looking toward inculcating a greater spirit of co-operation and an honest effort toward greater efficiency in the operation of all urban transportation service within the metropolitan area."

"IN VIEW OF WHAT HAS, AND STILL IS TAKING PLACE IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY IN THE WAY OF STRIFE AND MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND LABOR, THIS RATHER UNUSUAL AND PROGRESSIVE STEP TAKEN BY THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION TO BRING TO THOSE WHOM THEY REPRESENT A MORE THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH TO THE OTHER AND TO THE PUBLIC GENERALLY HAS BEEN DISTINCTLY PROGRESSIVE AND IN A MEASURE HAS RELIEVED MANAGEMENT OF MUCH OF ITS ANXIETY AND CONCERN IN THIS RESPECT."

What explains this change in Mr. Ritchie's attitude toward the officials of the Transport Workers Union? Is it to be accounted for by a change in the character or attitude of the officials toward the recent negotiations with the two companies? The answer is no. For they devoted even more time and patience and gave as much honest and serious consideration to the arguments and analytical studies presented by Mr. Ritchie in 1941 as they had in 1939. The reason for Mr. Ritchie's change of attitude is to be found in Mr. Ritchie himself. Mr. Ritchie is an old hand at union-busting—and he is now reverting to type. Concerning Mr. Ritchie's union-busting activities and his attitude toward the Transport Workers Union of America, the magazine, *Fortune*, wrote in July, 1940, as follows:

"Nowadays Omnibus labor relations are peaceful, but there have been vivid highspots in its history. Chicagoans will not soon forget the violent disorders of 1934, when the AFL union, with the breath-taking name of Amalgamated Association of Street & Electrical Railway Employees of America, undertook to organize Chicago Motor Coach, whose employees belonged to a company union. For five months the company continued service with strong-arm work on both sides until, with the deaths of a company dispatcher and a woman passenger, the strike collapsed. Chicago Motor Coach

remains the only transit company in the city not under AFL, and the Motor Coach Employees' Fraternity flourishes, with all the paternal accompaniments in which Mr. Ritchie has always believed—e. g., free medical attention, \$21-a-week sick benefits, loans up to \$50 without interest, etc."

"But the Chicago conflict was in pre-Wagner Act days, and Mr. Ritchie, a thorough realist, recognizes it as part of a buried past. THREE YEARS LATER IN NEW YORK, WHEN THE TWU DEMANDED AN ELECTION, HE GAVE IN, MUCH AS IT CALLED HIM. THE ELECTION WAS HELD, AND TO MR. RITCHIE'S INTENSE CHAGRIN, THE TWU WON, AND THE RESULT IS A CLOSED SHOP."

If Mr. Ritchie thinks that the people of the City of New York will permit him to repeat here his Chicago strong-arm methods, he is sadly mistaken. He is equally mistaken if he thinks that the Transport Workers Union will surrender to his strong-arm methods.

The facts in the controversy between the Transport Workers Union and the Fifth Avenue Coach and New York City Omnibus companies are relatively few and fairly simple. Our contracts with these companies expired on February 28, 1941. A week before the expiration we submitted to the two companies proposals for new contracts which would provide for increased wages, a uniform eight-hour day, and improved working conditions. These proposals were submitted not as an ultimatum, but as a basis for the negotiation of new contracts. And, in view of the fact that we live in a war period during which a substantial rise in the cost of living is universally expected, we felt that a reasonable attitude on the part of these companies would, in the light of their financial experience, require a reasonable increase in our wages, and an improvement in our hours and working conditions.

We have stated and neither of the companies has denied the following to be the facts:

¶ Fifth Avenue Coach Company earns net profits of more than \$2,000,000 a year. These profits represent an annual return of almost 100 per cent on the investment of its stockholders.

¶ Yet Mr. Ritchie proposed not only that the employees of the New York City Omnibus Corporation give up their holidays with pay, but that they surrender their sick leave with pay. The total cost of sick leave for these employees was \$12,500 a year. Can a corporation which earns net profits of over \$2,000,000 a year, representing an annual return of almost 100 per cent on the investment of its stockholders, pretend to have negotiated in good faith with a union when it proposes the surrender of a sick leave costing it six-tenths of one per cent of its annual profits?

¶ Fifth Avenue Coach Company had a stockholders' equity of \$3,000,000 in 1929. This grew to more than \$10,000,000 in 1940, notwithstanding that the company paid out of its treasury to its stockholders the sum of \$9,500,000 in dividends at the rate of half a million dollars a year between 1922 and 1940, inclusive. Yet Mr. Ritchie proposed that the employees of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, whose present wages are three-quarters of a million dollars less than they were in 1933, take a wage cut of approximately 4 cents an hour and give up their sick leave and holidays with pay.

The companies assert that we rejected their offers of mediation and arbitration. Our answer is that under the law it was and is the duty of these companies to bargain in good faith with the Transport Workers Union of America which is the collective bargaining representative of their employees. Mutual understanding and co-operation cannot be achieved by substitutes for the collective bargaining process. There can be no propriety in a suggestion for mediation or arbitration until the parties have exhausted every reasonable effort to arrive at an agreement through the process of bona fide collective bargaining. In view of the fact that Mr. Ritchie, as the representative of the Fifth Avenue Coach and New York City Omnibus companies did not bargain with us in good faith, it is clear that the responsibility for the current strike rests upon Mr. Ritchie's shoulders, not ours.

AUSTIN HOGAN, President,

Transport Workers Union of Greater New York, CIO.

cil have a membership of about 400,000. The TWU wanted their backing.

The minutes of the Executive Board Meeting of the Council for March 11 tell the story of how that backing was formally asked for and obtained:

*Bus strike*—Hogan reported on financial status of 5th Avenue Coach and Omnibus Corp. pointing out that they are both making

high profits, at the same time they propose to cut wages and worsen conditions. Strike is 100% effective. Described strikebreaking history of John A. Ritchie of 5th Avenue Co.

VOTED:

- 1) Council resolution in support of strike
- 2) Resolutions to Mayor and the two struck firms demanding that they bargain in good faith with union.

Board members agreed to keep their unions informed of all developments and stand ready for any assistance TWU strike committee may request.

President Curran to issue statement to press.

Fullest publicity to union case through leaflets and stories in trade union press, pledged by all board members.

Joe Curran, president of the National Maritime Union and of the Industrial Union Council, had been to the rally at the Windsor at noon. He had talked to the Union officials. His was not a perfunctory statement:

Such enthusiastic spirit I have never seen. This is truly a rank and file strike with rank and file spirit. These men know what they want and they are determined to fight on to achieve their demands. This strike is 100 per cent effective.

Mr. Ritchie is trying to befuddle the public with his newspaper advertisements. From my examination of the case John A. Ritchie did not enter into collective bargaining with the Transport Workers in good faith. He demanded the elimination of conductors from double-deck buses and wage cuts at a time when unemployment is wide-spread and the cost of living is soaring.

In the event that Mr. Ritchie, or anyone else for that matter, has any notion in their minds of introducing strike breakers, scabs and thugs as Ritchie did in Chicago in 1934, I want to advise them that the people and particularly the workers of the City of New York will not countenance such tactics for one moment. The Transport Workers Union is completely justified and has the full and undivided support of the New York labor movement.

The Council's stand reinforced the action which many union locals and their members had already taken. The strike had hardly begun when hundreds of telegrams, letters, and telephone calls began to pour into Union headquarters. They were put upon the

bulletin board at Transport Hall and helped to prove to the strikers what they already knew from their talks with the people they met in the street—that they were not alone in their fight.

One of the telegrams that came this day was especially pleasing to some who couldn't make up their minds about whether the Mayor or the press had hurt the Union more:

WE WON'T RIDE UNTIL YOU WIN  
HOLD THE FORT AND DON'T GIVE IN  
LET BUTCH SHOUT AND RANT AND ROAR  
WE ARE WITH YOU ALL THE MORE

PATRICK A. MC DONOUGH,  
PHOTOGRAPHIC EMP. LOCAL 415, UOPWA.

It was cheering news that people outside the Transport Workers Union were behind the strike. And it was cheering news, too, that subway workers within the Union were giving evidence of their solidarity with the busmen. One instance of this solidarity delighted the strikers. The police sergeant at the 146th Street garage would not allow more than twelve pickets at a time. But if four



*Transport Photo*

Austin Hogan (left) and Matthias Kearns (center) at the New Lenox Cafeteria, 145th Street and Lenox Avenue on a tour of field headquarters.

hundred of the men who worked in the IRT repair shop on Lenox Avenue and 146th Street all took a notion at lunchtime to walk single file behind the pickets to 145th Street where the cafeteria was, could the sergeant do anything more than scratch his head and grin? And at 4:30 the same thing happened. . . . The men did have to get to the subway at 145th Street.

There was a cold rain today and Comprehensive Bus Company drivers who were not on strike might have been tickled to death that they could go to a warm house after their day's work instead of marching in a picket line. Some did go home . . . but many others came to Transport Hall and offered their services. One came to the office of Gus Faber, treasurer for Local 100, and put two hundred dollars down on Gus's desk. "This is all the money I have in the world," he said, "but I want you to put it in the strike fund."

"But we don't need your money," said Gus.

"I wouldn't have this money except for the Union," he protested. "I have an acute gastric ulcer and the Union's free medical plan has saved me more than this in doctor's bills. The money really belongs to you."

Gus rejected the offer with thanks.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

*The Third Day* Reporters are always trying to figure out the "angle" on a story. Sometimes they probe for a long time until they finally hit on the truth; sometimes they jump at conclusions and end up wide of the mark. Like a couple of the boys who doped out that because Mayor LaGuardia was in Washington yesterday and Martin Dies came out with his "report" attacking the TWU leadership last night, that one had something to do with the other.

It wasn't necessarily so. After all, Dies doesn't have to be prodded. He is in the habit of rushing to the front (page) with his battery of billingsgate and vilification the moment any strike, anywhere, appears at all effective. As a matter of fact the one sure sign union leaders all over the country have that they are really going places in a strike is an attack by the poll-tax Congressman from Texas.

What he says is always the same. The Red-baiting pattern is too familiar to waste any space on in this book. Mike Quill disposed of the "report" on the TWU in proper summary fashion: "I will have no comment until Mr. Dies has been examined by a lunacy commission."

As was to be expected, the "report" got a big play in the newspapers—headlined on the front page of most of them. They reported, too, that "Rubber-Hose" George U. Harvey of Queens had come to the same conclusion as Dies about the leaders of the Union.

What the public thought of the Dies-Harvey "Red" barrage is impossible to tell. But what the strikers thought of it is easy to tell. They had seen it all before in yesterday's editorials. And they had made their attitude plain at the Windsor rally. The "Red" attack just didn't make a dent on them.

Nevertheless the game of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," which the newspapers and the bus companies were playing, continued. The companies' full page ads of Monday were followed by the anti-Union editorials of Tuesday. And the anti-Union editorials of Tuesday were followed by another series of full-page ads on Wednesday. Wednesday's is reproduced on page 69.

A bus driver was handed the ad, the Dies "report," and the Harvey outburst; and was then asked for a comment. He laid them side by side, read them slowly and carefully, pulled on his pipe and said in his Irish brogue: "This is the way I figure it. If you ask for a dollar raise today you're a Communist. If you ask for a two-dollar raise, you sleep with Earl Browder. If you ask for a three-dollar raise, you're the American Joe Stalin. Me, I still think I'm entitled to higher wages than I'm getting."

# WHY ARE YOU WALKING TODAY?

*Read the Answer in the New York Newspapers!*

## "A Red Quill in The Side of N.Y."

SOME SENSITIVE New Yorkers were left in a dither yesterday, to get in their destinations and back to their beds, by a strike which met the

New York Post  
TUESDAY, MAR. 12, 1941

DAILY  
THURSDAY, MAR. 14, 1941

The Sun  
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 1941

## "A Bad Strike at a Mean Time."

In the matter of public opinion the strikers are unfortunate. Their demands are extortionate: a 25 per cent increase in pay, with three weeks' vacation instead of two. The fact that these demands are so unreasonable may explain BOSS QUILL's refusal to arbitrate. This attitude is well described by Mayor LaGuardia, a friend of unions, as "bullheaded, obstinate and stupid."

This is a strike which nobody can support except Mr. QUILL and his blind followers. It is a strike which can be broken if order is maintained. There is only one question involved: Who runs this town, the people or QUILL?

## "Quill's Bus Strike."

Quill and his union leaders appear to put enforcement of their own powers far above the mere wages and welfare of workers. As for "the public be damned" policy that used to be attributed solely to capitalist employers, Quill and some other labor leaders like him are rapidly making it seem the only half-concealed policy of sections of organized labor itself.

Quill should wake up to the fact that unwarranted public utility strikes like this bus strike are likely to intensify present demand for anti-strike legislation—with possible results much more drastic than the mildly preventive provisions of the Railway Labor Act.

Not only the rights and convenience of the public but also the continuance of men's jobs can't be left wholly at the mercy of power-wielding labor leaders who promote strike activity to strengthen their personal grip and command. Not even in the pressure, hurry and distraction of national defense effort.

Quill and his "bullheaded" bus strike are a significant, albeit local, warning.

New York  
World-Telegram  
TUESDAY, MAR. 12, 1941

## "Not a Private Case"

When 800,000 New Yorkers are seriously inconvenienced by a strike, they are entitled to know all the facts about it. They were kept in ignorance of the month of private negotiations preceding the Monday morning stoppage.

The transit companies had offered mediation or arbitration, two methods of procedure which would have permitted orderly giving of the wage-and-hour issues, pro and con in the public mind.

The union's effort to settle the dispute by an abrupt strike is an effort to settle it without leaving time for the intervention of the informed, collective opinion of the people of New York. Yet their intention is to the interest of either the companies or the employees. They were brushed aside.

The 800,000 were, in most cases, forced into the subways, complicating the transit problem of the millions who use these already overcrowded facilities and giving them, also, an interest in the case.

These interests are the paramount interests. We believe that no method of settling any transit problem is sound which goes outside this frame of reference.

## "THE BUS STRIKE"

At a strike Monday morning, Richard J. Quill's Transport Workers Union (TWU) started the strike which has tied up LARA Fifth Avenue and the New York Omnibus Corp. buses and left about 800,000 New Yorkers in a jam. People using subways, Ellis and La Guardia airports, and other public facilities are also inconvenienced. The TWU's most vital service is the transfer of passengers from the city's main bus terminal to the city's main subway station. The TWU is the only union in the city which is not a part of the city's public utility system. It is the only union in the city which is not a part of the city's public utility system. It is the only union in the city which is not a part of the city's public utility system.

DAILY NEWS  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 1941

TWO leaders "bullheaded, obstinate and stupid," and as such, they are not fit to be in charge of the city's public utility system.

The strikers were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system. They were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system. They were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system.

They were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system. They were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system. They were given the right to be in charge of the city's public utility system.

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FIFTH AVENUE COACH CO. • NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORP.

Allan S. Hayward, CIO National Director of Organization, tried to reach Mayor LaGuardia in Washington last night. He wanted to arrange to meet with him concerning the dispute between the TWU and the Board of Transportation over the subway contracts which expire June 30. Mr. Hayward had been trying since Decem-

ber to meet with the Mayor to discuss the problem. He couldn't reach him in Washington, so he came to New York.

When he phoned the Mayor for an appointment this morning, the Mayor asked if he wouldn't discuss the bus situation first. Haywood agreed, but informed the Mayor that he would go to Transport Hall to see the Union leaders first.

He conferred with John L. Lewis and with Philip Murray, President of the CIO; then saw the Union officials; and at noon was in conference with the Mayor. Their talk lasted only six minutes, but it resulted in clearing up one of the points at issue. When the Mayor asked Haywood why the Union heads wouldn't come to City Hall, Haywood suggested that the Mayor ask them down: "I'm sure if you give them the time and place, they'll come."

The Mayor answered, "Three P.M."

Haywood then phoned the Union and reported to the Mayor, "The boys will come down in a body. How about the companies?"

The Mayor replied, "Don't worry, they'll be here."

It was that simple. The Union officials had said from the start of the strike that, if they were invited, they would go to City Hall. Now they were invited. At 3:00 P.M. they were in the Mayor's office—Quill, Santo, Sacher, Hogan, Kearns, Saul Mills, accompanied by Haywood. The bus operators were represented by Ritchie, John E. McCarthy, President of the companies, and Boykin Wright, counsel. The Mayor's labor aide, Mrs. Ethel Epstein, was also present. This was the first time since the strike began that there was a joint conference.

The Mayor suggested that the strikers go back to work and mediation begin. Haywood expressed surprise at the proposal. The Union leaders said, "Mediation, yes. Go back to work, no."

Arthur S. Meyer, chairman of the State Mediation Board, was suggested as a mediator. He was agreeable to both sides, so the Mayor phoned him in Miami and prevailed upon him to cut short his stay there and fly back to New York.

At the conclusion of the ninety-minute conference the Mayor issued the following statement:

I am asking both sides, that is, the representatives of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company and New York Omnibus Company and

the representatives of the Transport Workers Union to meet and to resume negotiations. I have requested Arthur Meyer, Chairman of the State Mediation Board, to fly from Miami to New York at once. Mr. Meyer, notwithstanding his physical condition, has consented to do so. Weather permitting, he will land in New York City early tomorrow (Thursday) morning. The representatives of the Transport Workers Union have promised the Mayor to call a meeting of the membership for tomorrow night. The Mayor understands that every effort will be made to resume operations at the earliest possible moment. Both sides have consented to meet with the Mayor tomorrow, Thursday, at 7 P.M. if there is any hitch in the negotiations.

It was hoped that Mr. Meyer, who is a skilled negotiator, would be able to bring about an agreement the next day. If that happened, then the terms of the agreement could be brought to the meeting of the strikers to be passed upon by them, since the strike could not be called off by the Union leaders but only by the membership itself. A leaflet announcing the meeting was mimeographed immediately and distributed to the strikers at their respective posts (see page 72).

The advice about disregarding rumors was necessary because rumors of all kinds were constantly being circulated, most of them untrue and many of them possible trouble-makers. That none of them was ever allowed to assume dangerous proportions was due solely to the fact that the strike committee was on its toes every minute. As soon as a rumor started, it was phoned into headquarters by the picket captain on the spot. It was checked at headquarters and the truth was either phoned back or carried to the line by special men sent out to investigate the source of the rumor.

As the strike ended its third day, the line-up of forces on both sides became apparent. On the side of the companies and the Mayor were the Fifth Avenue Association, the New York Board of Trade, and the Twenty-third Street Association. In telegrams to the Mayor they urged that he support State legislation designed to prevent strikes on public utilities. In Mike Quill's mail came some anonymous letters which generally followed this pattern:

"We need a Good American Dictator. So we can put you and

# SECOND GENERAL STRIKE MEETING

FIFTH AVE. COACH &  
N.Y.C. OMNIBUS STRIKERS  
THURS, MARCH, 13.  
9.00 P.M.  
ROYAL WINDSOR  
66TH ST. COLUMBUS AVE-

This meeting is called for the purpose of giving a second report on the progress and developments in our strike for new contracts on the two struck properties. All members are to attend to their assignments on the picket lines on their regular shifts. P.M. men will remain on the lines until time to leave for the meeting.

**WARNING!**

Do not heed any reports, rumors or orders from any source except official advice from Union headquarters transmitted to you through the regular officers in charge.

Section Chairmen Will arrange for Skeleton Picket Lines At Garages During the meeting
---

ADMISSION ON  
PRESENTATION OF  
PICKET CARDS ONLY

*Austin Horgan*

UOPWA  
No. 16

President  
Transport Workers Union  
Of Greater New York

your kind in a detention camp like they do over there. We will get you yet. So Beware."

On the side of the Union was the New York Conference of Inalienable Rights which issued a statement warning that the attacks on the TWU were part of a campaign to curb labor's right to strike. Also the New York Chapter of the Newspaper Guild whose Representative Assembly on Tuesday passed a motion which was significant for what it said both in and between the lines:

WHEREAS we, as newspapermen familiar with the manner in which strikes are covered and reported, realize what actions by public officials are emphasized in the press as best serving the ends of the employers, and

WHEREAS we, as labor union members, recognize the tactics of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company and the New York City Omnibus Corp., as designed and intended to break the morale of the Transport Workers Union in its efforts to secure better wages and working conditions for its members,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Representative Assembly of the Newspaper Guild of New York, most strongly urge Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia to exercise the full measure of his influence to persuade the management of these two companies to negotiate with the TWU in good faith and that, if he cannot see his way clear to doing that, he at least cease his hostility toward the TWU and observe an attitude of strict impartiality.

Messages of sympathy and support from more unions, both AFL and CIO, civic organizations, and American Labor Party clubs continued to pour into Union headquarters. Some anonymous letters which came to Quill's desk were friendly:

"Keep up the good work. Make them share the profits. They have sweated you long enough. So Ritchie won't be so richy. We are all behind you. Hold the line, we'll walk. It's good for the health."

In Jackson Heights, a six-year-old boy asked the picket captain to put a TWU sign on his Irish setter dog . . . said he wanted to help the strikers.

A group of North Shore busmen from Queens, not under a TWU contract, offered their help as a debt of gratitude for aid given them by the Union during their fight for higher wages last February.

The *Daily Worker* and *PM* continued to stand out from the rest of the press in their coverage of the strike. *PM* reporters sought for and obtained stories from the strikers which told the story of their struggle in human terms. One *PM* interview, published today, gave the lie to the editorials that were screaming "Quill's Bus Strike":

Why am I on strike, you want to know? Well, if you mean did I favor it, or was I misled by the union officers like the papers said, I can tell you quick.

The men on my line had a meeting and we talked over what our demands should be. We voted on them, and sent the union officers in to get them. They told us the company wouldn't give them, and we voted 100 per cent to strike. It wasn't Mike Quill and Austin Hogan and the other officers telling us what to do. It was us telling them.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 13

*The Fourth Day* The plane from Miami landed at La Guardia Field at 8:40 A.M. By 10:00, sun-tanned, soft-spoken Arthur Meyer was in his office at 250 West 57th Street and the conference had begun.

The entire negotiating committee was there for the Union. In addition to Quill, Santo, Sacher, Hogan, Kearns, and Mills, there were seven representatives of Omnibus and six of Fifth Avenue Coach employees:

## For Fifth Avenue:

Daniel O'Neill	Local Executive Board
Patrick O'Connor	Chairman, Section 501
John McGuire	Vice-Chairman, Section 501
William Costello	Chairman, Section 502
Frank O'Connor	Chairman, Section 503
Henry Brown	Chairman, Section 504

## For Omnibus:

James Flatley	Local Executive Board
George Stephen	Local Executive Board
Patrick Neville	Chairman, Section 401
Edward Reidy	Chairman, Section 402
Peter McCaffery	Chairman, Section 403
John O'Sullivan	Chairman, Section 404
Floyd Spencer	Chairman, Section 405

The companies' representatives were Ritchie, McCarthy, and Wright.

Mr. Meyer met first with both sides together, then with each side separately, then with both together again. After nine hours of discussion the position of companies and Union was essentially what it had been.

The companies stuck to their demand for either one-man operation or pay cuts on Fifth Avenue; for elimination of paid holidays and sick benefits on both Fifth and Omnibus. They wanted the strikers to return to work while the dispute was arbitrated.

The Union, on the other hand, insisted that the companies' proposals for worsening the conditions of the old contracts indicated that they were not bargaining in good faith. It argued that the strike would not be called off until the companies submitted "reasonable" counter-proposals—reasonable in the sense that their terms were an improvement on the old contracts.

At 7:00 P.M. the meeting ended and everybody went to City Hall to report to the Mayor. Then the Mayor conferred with both groups together, the companies alone, next the Union alone. *This was the first time that Mayor LaGuardia had any lengthy discussion with the Union on the issues involved in the strike.* Both Mr. Meyer and Mrs. Epstein took part in all the discussions.

The conference broke up at 10:50 P.M. and Mr. LaGuardia made the following announcement:

Mediation will continue tomorrow. Sufficient progress has not been made to come to an agreement tonight. Sufficient progress has been made not to terminate negotiations. Both sides will resume negotiations tomorrow morning in Mr. Meyer's office.

At the Royal Windsor meanwhile, the 3500 strikers had assembled, expecting that they would ratify a favorable strike settlement before the evening was over. Hundreds of TWU members from other transit lines were admitted to the galleries.

No one else was to be admitted—those were the orders. And no one else was. Committees had taken over the policing of entrance and lobbies—an array of muscular uniformed busmen who asserted their authority. Every credential was examined with care. Reporters, clamoring for admission, found that this was a gate which could not be crashed.

Nine o'clock passed . . . without word from City Hall. Greetings and expressions of encouragement and support from scores of organizations had come in since yesterday. They were read and applauded. This telegram, from the Playground Directors, Local 2, State County and Municipal Workers of America, got a big hand:

WE WALKED TODAY AND WE KNOW WHO IS TO BLAME WE'LL KEEP WALKING AND LIKING IT BECAUSE WE KNOW THE TRANSPORT WORKERS ARE FIGHTING FOR A DECENT AMERICAN STANDARD OF LIVING KEEP PUNCHING TILL THE BATTLE IS WON YOUR FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT.

Short speeches were made by stewards and section officers. Then Matt Kearns, who had left City Hall earlier than the others, walked to the platform and displayed his ability as a singer as well as a strike leader, by leading the group in songs.

At 11:30 the others returned from City Hall. Now for the first time reporters and photographers were admitted. As the leaders filed into the hall, the tumultuous scenes of previous strike meetings were reenacted. The strikers were behind their leaders, settlement or no.

The leaders had come to give the men a report of the negotiations. It was very late, so they made their accounts short and to the



*Courtesy PM*

"That's telling 'em, Mikel"

point. When Chairman Hogan said, "The job yet remains to teach John A. Ritchie the lesson he is looking for," the men knew the outcome of the conference; the strike was still on. That didn't worry them. Their spirits were still high, their enthusiasm unshaken.

When Santo was introduced, the customary shout of "Take your coat off, John," echoed throughout the hall. Santo took his coat off, then reported a new angle: "I think the Mayor learned a lot. When he came out of his office tonight, he did not call us obstinate or bullheaded any more, but he was shifting his glasses in that peculiar manner of his and looking at Mr. Ritchie. . . . We are ready and willing to return to work if a bona fide offer is made. There was no such offer."

Sacher, too, hinted that meeting with the Union leaders and hearing their proposals had taught Mr. LaGuardia something. "The Mayor will change his opinion of who is bullheaded, obstinate, and stupid," he said.

The exuberant outburst that greeted Quill, the last speaker, prompted him to say: "Save that steam. If we haven't a new contract in the bag by Sunday night you can use it on the sidewalks of New York on Monday (St. Patrick's Day). We are looking for a contract signed on the dotted line, because we don't trust Mr. Ritchie."

Today was payday for the striking busmen. Their regular checks for the week before the strike began were waiting for them at the eight paymasters' windows. But in all parts of the city those paymasters' windows were being picketed. What to do?

One or two strikers in each place walked through the line. But all the others waited for orders. The orders came through from Transport Hall, in this mimeographed notice to picket captains:

### *TO ALL PICKET CAPTAINS*

*At 12 o'clock noon* you are to present yourself at points where checks are usually paid to the men and remain there until all checks have been received by our men.

Remove pickets from part of garage where men will enter and leave.

Appoint another man to take your post outside.

(signed)

Matthias Kearns

General Organizer

At 132nd Street when the picket captain reported the order to the men on the line he was asked, "Did you get that over the phone?"

"Yes," he answered—just to see what would happen.

"Then we'll wait until we see it in writing."

It was only after he showed them the notice from headquarters that these men consented to walk off the picket line to collect their pay.

Patrick White, veteran bus driver and picket captain at South Ferry, today sported a six-inch green ribbon in the lapel of his overcoat. "Just to prove we're not all 'Reds,'" he told inquiring Staten Islanders.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 14

*The Fifth Day* Seven-and-a-half hours more of negotiations today resulted finally in the announcement by Arthur Meyer that the dispute would be settled "by power instead of by reason."

However, despite the fact that the parleys were publicly ended and it seemed that little had been accomplished, the truth was that both sides had come much nearer an agreement than ever before. Indeed, the final settlement of the bus strike was made up in great part of concessions made on this day by the companies and the Union.

The meetings started at 11:00 A.M. in the offices of Mr. Meyer. At 2:00 P.M. Mr. Meyer and Mrs. Epstein went to City Hall to confer with the Mayor. While they were gone, the members of the negotiating committee of the Union met among themselves and decided to revise their demands. Their original demands, according to Ritchie, would have cost the companies approximately \$3,250,000; the negotiating committee now decided to accept a cash settlement that would not exceed \$1,000,000.

It appeared, on the face of it, that the Union had made a drastic cut in its demands. A cut it was, but nothing like what the figures seemed to indicate. The \$3,250,000 estimate had been made by the company. It was obvious to the Union representatives that this was an inflated figure—a theoretical high mark which the companies would not reach in actual operation. Now, to bring about a prompt settlement of the dispute, the Union was guaranteeing to revise its demands so the cost would not go beyond \$1,000,000. The negotiating committee felt that while a million would not cover all of the proposals of the men for improvements, it would go a long way toward achieving that goal. The committee stipulated that this was a rock-bottom offer—made not for the purpose of further bargaining but for the sole purpose of a quick settlement.

When Mr. Meyer returned, the committee submitted this offer to him. He carried it to the companies. They rejected it. But they countered with an offer that was a retreat from their former position. The companies proposed two alternatives:

1: To submit all issues as to both companies to arbitration, i.e., to have the arbitrator weigh and consider not only the Union's demands but also the companies'. [This was their old offer.]

2: To withdraw its counter proposals as to both companies if the Union would agree to sign a new contract with Fifth Avenue Coach on precisely the same terms as the old contract, and submit its Omnibus demands to arbitration. [This was new.]

The Union was here faced with a proposition which meant, in the first instance, a possibility of a worsening of its old conditions; or in the second instance, a possibility of division in the strikers' ranks. And further in the second instance, the acceptance merely of the continuation of the contract in Fifth Avenue Coach would

have been an admission that notwithstanding the good financial condition of the companies the Union was accepting their argument not to improve conditions. Such an admission would have undermined the basis for the Union's claims for improvements in Omnibus as well. Had the strike been even a partial failure, this might have been a good offer in the eyes of the Union. But the strike was 100 per cent effective—the Union committee therefore unanimously rejected the companies' proposal.

Neither side would budge from its new position. There was nothing Mr. Meyer could do but announce the breakdown of his efforts. At 6:35 P.M. he summoned reporters and made this statement:

After having explored all possibilities fully and worked with both parties to the controversy for two full days I regret to say that at the present time it is evident that further efforts at mediation will prove useless. The gap between the desires and demands of the parties has not been closed and I am, at least for the present, giving up my efforts.

In response to a question he added that he saw no hope of further meetings. Another question on the possibility of an attempt by the companies to resume bus operations with the aid of strikebreakers brought this response:

I have no knowledge of any plans to operate the buses or of any strikebreakers. However, I can think of no step at the present time to adjust this dispute and it looks as though the strike would continue until it was settled by power instead of reason.

When Mayor LaGuardia was informed of the collapse of mediation, he telephoned a statement to City Hall, which was released at 6:45 P.M.:

I have just been informed by Mr. Arthur Meyer that negotiations and mediation between the bus companies and the Transport Workers Union have broken off. I am so sorry that all the efforts made to bring the leaders to reason have been useless. It seems to me that negotiations having been broken, the arbitration offered is the only way of settling the matter.

This is the third time arbitration has been offered by the companies. I strongly recommend to the men that they return to work

and accept arbitration. That is the American way of settling disputes after negotiations have failed.

It must be remembered that all of the existing terms and wages in the present contract were offered pending an arbitration award.

Was it an accident that Ritchie's statement, issued late this evening, closely resembled the Mayor's—that, in fact, it, too, talked of arbitration as the American way? Here it is:

The Fifth Avenue Coach Company and the New York City Omnibus Corporation renew their offer of arbitration on return of the men to work under their present contract.

We have been negotiating and mediating with the Union for more than three weeks but it has been impossible to arrive at an agreement. After negotiations failed, in response to a call from the Mayor we accepted and went into mediation under Mr. Arthur Meyer, chairman of the State Mediation Board and a patient, conscientious, able and experienced mediator. We regret that it was unavailing.

Mr. Meyer has tried to get the men back to work and the buses moving again but the Union has point-blank refused unless their demands are met in advance. The Union will not permit the public to ride pending arbitration or other solution.

We are willing to submit to arbitration any question the Union wishes to take before the arbitrator. We in turn to have the same right. We consider this the American way, the fair way, the just way to adjust a controversy over wages when the collective bargaining principle is recognized and the closed shop is in effect.

The Union's belated offer to reduce its demands from more than \$3,000,000 to \$1,000,000 proves how fantastic were their original demands. Their modified demands are impossible and wholly beyond the financial means of the companies.

In order that our position may be clear we declare publicly that we recognize the Transport Workers Union as the bargaining agency of the employees of our two companies and we also publicly declare that we will continue in any new agreement a closed shop. We are confident that the proposition we make is fair. We hope our employees will accept the offer.

The Union statement, signed by Hogan, pointed to the revision downward of its original demands which, the Union insisted, were "reasonable" to begin with. It follows:

We have been in constant conference with the Mayor and Mr. Arthur S. Meyer, chairman of the State Mediation Board, for the last two days.

Notwithstanding the vicious propaganda directed against the demands which were originally presented by the Transport Workers Union of America to the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, we are persuaded that these demands constituted reasonable proposals as a basis for the negotiation of new contracts.

Mindful, however, of the transportation needs of the people of the City of New York and in deference to repeated requests by the Mayor and Mr. Meyer that we modify our demands so as to permit of a prompt settlement which would terminate the strike and restore bus service to the people of our city, the negotiating committee of the Transport Workers Union unanimously voted to revise the demands as follows:

The original demands made upon the New York City Omnibus Corporation, as estimated by the company itself, amounted to \$2,000,000. These demands were reduced to the sum of \$750,000. The net corporate income of the New York City Omnibus Corporation exceeds \$2,000,000 a year. The granting of a \$750,000 increase will leave the company with a yearly net income of \$1,250,000, which will still permit it to pay a 25 per cent dividend each year to its stockholders.

The original demands on the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, as estimated by the company itself, amounted to \$1,243,000. These demands were reduced to \$250,000. The net corporate income of the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, which exceeds \$500,000 a year, will still permit it to pay out to its stockholders a liberal yearly dividend on their real investment.

The revised demands were presented by Mr. Meyer to John A. Ritchie, chairman of the board of both companies, and Mr. Ritchie not only rejected them but adhered to his original stubborn refusal to make any improvement in our conditions.

Much as we regret the inconvenience to the people, the unyielding and unreasonable position of the companies compels us to continue the strike.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Meyer to bring about a settlement.

In order to report again to the membership, Union officials decided to hold another rally. So notices announcing the Third General Strike Meeting, Sunday at 2:00 P.M., were mimeographed and distributed to the strikers at their posts.

There were always about three hundred men assigned to 132nd Street and Broadway, so the Union rented a store nearby to serve as headquarters and a place to rest. Strikers brought chairs and cups from home and from this day on there was always a cup of Conductor Sinnott's good hot coffee available. When buns were donated by strikers' wives, that made things even nicer. The days and nights were bitter cold and nothing hit the spot like coffee and a bun after an hour or two on the picket line.

From 3410 Broadway, headquarters of the 21st Assembly District American Labor Party, came a delegation of "Friends of the Busmen." They offered their services to help out the men on strike in any way. When they were told that a radio was all that was lacking to make things comfortable enough to stick it out for years, they left—and soon returned with a radio.

The pickets who were regularly assigned to duty in front of Ritchie's pent-house apartment at 875 Fifth Avenue heard no radio music, but they did get coffee every day. Tenants in Ritchie's house gave it to them.

Paddy White at South Ferry wasn't wearing his green ribbon today. Instead he carried a green cardboard shamrock, about a foot high. "Only seventy-two hours to St. Patrick's Day," he explained.

Today's batch of telegrams expressing good wishes contained one from a Union affiliated with neither AFL nor CIO. The United Telephone Organization is an independent—but the tone of its wire would indicate that unlike 99.44 per cent of "independent" organizations, it is not a company union:

THE SPLENDID DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THEIR STRIKE AGAINST THE NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS AND FIFTH AVENUE COACH DESERVES OUR HIGHEST COMMENDATION. YOUR PROBLEM IS STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE TELEPHONE WORKERS

OF NEW YORK WHO ALSO ARE CURRENTLY TRYING TO WREST A MORE EQUITABLE PORTION OF THE PROFITS OF AN OPERATING SUBSIDIARY BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR INTO THE COFFERS OF A DISTANT HOLDING COMPANY. ON BEHALF OF OUR ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP ACCEPT OUR BEST WISHES FOR A FULL AND COMPLETE VICTORY.

On the floor of the auditorium at Transport Hall today, there appeared a large placard. On it were printed these words, written by J. A. Fitzpatrick, a striker-driver on the Broadway line of Omnibus Corp.:

(To the tune of "Irishman's Dream")

Sure the shamrocks are growing on Broadway  
'Cause there's no buses there so it seems.  
And the Mayor of New York is beginning to squawk  
'Cause his subways are jammed to extremes.  
The Union is stronger than ever,  
And the stool pigeons don't mean a thing;  
We can hear Ritchie yell and we'll see him in hell  
That's every good bus driver's dream.

(This became one of the favorite strike songs.)

12:00 P.M. — Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 15

*The Sixth Day* One of the busmen's wives was sore. In her mailbox this morning—and in every other striker's mailbox—there was some mail she didn't want. There was a reproduction of some *Mirror* letters attacking the TWU and a reprint of the paid ad quoting the five anti-Union editorials.

Some of the busmen's wives threw the letters into the garbage pail. This particular busman's wife was moved to write an answer.

She didn't know who had sent the letters, but she took a guess. Her answer went to

MR. JOHN A. RITCHIE  
605 W. 132ND STREET  
NEW YORK CITY.

Here is what she wrote:

Sir:—

I wish to thank you most sincerely for the very flattering volume of mail received at our home this morning, and to commiserate with you, a poor man, heading a nearly bankrupt monopoly, for the necessity of further depleting your meagre resources by expensive advertising, printing and postage at six cents per capita. Obviously the Post Office Dept. will not be "in the red" this year as long as you so lavishly expend the stockholders' money on urgent, though repetitious communications to your employees' families. You would have saved quite a bit of money by inducing your good friend, Congressman Dies, to insert the material in the Congressional Record and have it franked under his signature.

Doubtless, you thought that our husbands, underpaid, overworked, and at present unemployed, were not in a sufficiently solvent financial condition to delve into their reserves for the wherewithal to purchase a newspaper. Please be assured that we wives have become expert at handling small wages and have managed to lay aside the price, not only of a newspaper, but of a very lovely umbrella to be used on the proverbial rainy day.

We are thankful for the implied compliment contained in sending us the Mirror reprints. You are quite right in assuming that . . . family men do not bring that sterling example of yellow journalism into their homes . . .

It would have been more to the point for you to explain what provision could be made for the conductors you proposed to cast out on the streets. Your suggestions as to the proper approach in dealing with the landlord, et al., would have been most acceptable. I hope you will act upon these matters, even though your superlative ingenuity may be somewhat taxed.

There is nothing to be gained by slandering God-fearing, decent men. Many of them have grown gray in your service. Down deep in that hard heart of yours, you know that they are motivated not by Communistic philosophy, but by the teachings of the Nazarene,

whose concepts of social justice and the rights of labor are lucidly set forth in Holy Writ and in the Encyclicals of our Popes.

The money spent in excoriating innocent men would have more than sufficed to make life a little more bearable for them, and would have paid you enormous dividends in good will.

Now and in the future our lives will be dominated by the vows we made on our wedding day—to be loyal to our husbands “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health,” and to bear whatever crosses God sends, with patience and fortitude. In this home, at any rate, my husband will be more encouraged and loved than ever before. We Irish women are well accustomed to standing beside our men, whether under the heel of Cromwell, before the lash of the British Empire, or in the path of a juggernaut called Ritchie.

Sincerely yours,

Deirdre

(You will understand why I must employ a *nom de plume*.)

This striker's wife knew the score. She was evidently not taken in by the barrage of cleverly written company ads, venomous editorials, slanted newspaper stories, the Mayor's outbursts, and Red-baiting articles by George Sokolsky and other boss-lovers and union-haters. To help keep the morale of other wives unbroken in the face of this barrage, the Union ran off 3500 of these leaflets:

## FACTS

*About the Fifth Avenue Coach and N. Y. C.  
Omnibus STRIKE.*

*The Companies want—*

To Throw the Conductors off the double-deckers.

To Cut wages.

To Take away sick-leave and paid holidays.

To break the men's Transport Workers Union so they can then cut wages some more and again be able to suspend or fire men any time the bosses please.

*The Strikers want—*

To keep two men on all double-deckers.

To keep and improve sick leave, vacations and paid holidays.

To raise wages, because the men are worth more, because these companies make huge profits, and because the cost of food, clothing and shelter is going up all the time.

To shorten hours, so more men can have steady work and all employees can save their health.

To keep their Transport Workers Union, so nobody will take away all that they have gained in the past and so that they can continue to have job security and decent pay in the future.

\* \* \*

The company propaganda, paid for by the companies and printed in the newspapers, is sent out to confuse the public. Their letters to your homes are intended to break your spirit with lies.

This is a fight of Men, Women and Children against tyrants. This is a fight of righteousness and justice against wicked profiteers and their inhuman treatment.

This is a fight of 3,500 bus strikers together with 40,000 other members of the Transport Workers Union, a million members of organized labor and the millions of the riding public, against a handful of money-mad Wall Street bankers.

This is a fight of all true Americans of all races, creeds and colors, against men of greed who wish to dictate to the people and rule their employees with an iron hand.

This is a fight between decent, brave and honest men who give their lives and health in the service of the companies and the public against a few millionaires who each year make millions in excess profits.

TWU officials went to the Hotel Roosevelt this morning to discuss the progress of the strike with the two leaders of the CIO who were in New York City for the coal miners' negotiations. Philip Murray, President of the CIO, had kept in touch with the situation through Allan Haywood, who was constantly informed over the

telephone of all developments. Unfortunately Murray was leaving for Washington this morning so the Union officials could not see him.

They did see John L. Lewis and discussed with him the question of arbitration which had become the theme song of every attack against the Union. Lewis upheld their position. He said that it was unthinkable that a CIO union should accept any arbitration procedure that would include possible loss of gains won through collective bargaining. "Boys, if you accept arbitration downward," he exclaimed, "I'll disown you." He told them that the miners had stayed out on strike for five months in 1922—because they had refused to accept that kind of arbitration.

When the negotiating committee met with Arthur Meyer again in the afternoon, they made one further concession toward settling the dispute. They offered to accept arbitration of their demands upward, to the extent of \$1,000,000—\$250,000 for Fifth Avenue and \$750,000 for Omnibus. *Thus, on the sixth day of the strike, the offer that was finally adopted was proposed by the Union.*

The Union went so far as to put that offer in writing. The following document, drawn up by Harry Sacher in proper legal language, was in John Santo's pocket from this day on. It was drawn as between the Union and Omnibus for arbitration upward to a limit of \$750,000; it was understood that for the other company the words "Fifth Avenue Coach" and "\$250,000" would be substituted:

AGREEMENT between NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORP., MADISON AVENUE COACH, and EIGHTH AVENUE COACH CORP., Parties of the First Part, and TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA, Party of the Second Part,

W I T N E S S E T H :

WHEREAS a collective bargaining agreement between the Parties of the First and Second Part governing the wages, hours and working conditions of the employees of the Parties of the First Part expired on the 28th day of February, 1941; and

WHEREAS the Party of the Second Part now demands that the Parties of the First Part improve the wages, hours and working conditions of their employees at an additional cost of \$750,000 a year and a dispute has arisen between the parties out of said demand,

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of one (\$1.00) dollar lawful money of the United States by each of the parties to the other in hand paid at or before the execution of this agreement and for other good and valuable consideration, the parties do hereby agree as follows:

1. The dispute between the parties arising out of the aforementioned demand made by the Transport Workers Union of America upon the Parties of the First Part shall be submitted to \_\_\_\_\_ as arbitrator, who shall have power only to determine what improvements shall be made in the wages, hours and working conditions of the employees of the Parties of the First Part over and above the wages, hours and working conditions provided for in the agreement between the parties hereto which expired on February 28, 1941, the cost of which improvements shall not exceed the sum of \$750,000 a year commencing as of the 1st day of March, 1941.

2. All improvements awarded to the employees by the arbitrator shall be effective as of March 1, 1941.

3. The award of the arbitrator shall be binding on all parties hereto. The parties shall immediately upon the promulgation of said award enter into a written contract for a term of — years commencing as of the 1st day of March, 1941, which contract shall contain all the provisions contained in the agreement which expired on February 28, 1941, except such provisions as are improved by the award of the arbitrator and as to the latter provisions the same shall be superseded by the provisions contained in the award of the arbitrator.

Mr. Meyer conferred with both the companies' representatives and the Mayor after he had finished with the Union. The Union's offer was rejected by the companies. Whether the companies rejected this new offer after consultation with the Mayor and with his approval, is not known. But the Union's proposal at this time was the basis for the final settlement of the great bus strike. The responsibility for the continuance of the strike for six days more must be borne by the companies. *Whatever inconvenience the public suffered from this time on was due entirely to the refusal of the companies to say "yes" on Saturday, instead of on the next Thursday.*

The Union leaders returned to the Hotel Roosevelt this evening and gave a full report of the day's events to John L. Lewis. They told him of their proposal to arbitrate upward, and of its rejection. Lewis advised them that their position was correct and that he would continue to support them. He offered to give them not only his moral support "but money if needed and men if needed." With good reason is John L. Lewis revered by militant labor leaders. The "old man," as he is affectionately called by the heads of new CIO unions which he helped to organize, is an unfailing source of strength in a crisis.

The "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" game was still being played. Today, another paid ad—this time only a half-page—appeared again in all the afternoon papers except *PM*. (See p. 92.)

The papers got the money for these ads. And the companies got stories in the "news" columns that the strike was no longer solid, and that the companies planned to resume operations again with strikebreakers running the buses.

## BUS STRIKERS REPORTED DIVIDED

screamed the *World-Telegram*.

And according to Hearst's *Journal and American*, "A breach developed today in the previously solid ranks of 3,500 CIO bus strikers as pickets were heard complaining openly that they wanted to return to work."

The Union reply to these rumors was quickly forthcoming in a statement issued by Saul Mills:

The union denies there have been any defections. The strike is 100 per cent effective. The ranks are 100 per cent solid. The publication of such unauthorized statements and such rumors is a continuation of propaganda for open strike-breaking. It will never succeed.

# WHY ARE YOU STILL WALKING?

AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS	
Fifth Avenue Coach Company Employees for 1940:	
Drivers . . . .	\$2,976.44
Conductors . . . .	1,898.84
All others:	
skilled and unskilled . . . .	1,976.03

*Because the Officials of  
the Transport Workers  
Union Will Not Let Our  
Men Go Back to Work!*

AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS	
New York City Omnibus Corporation Employees for 1940:	
Drivers . . . .	\$2,126.81
All others:	
skilled and unskilled . . . .	1,906.23

We have been in conference, negotiation and mediation with the officials of the Transport Workers Union for more than three weeks.

In response to a call from the Mayor of the City of New York, we, at once, accepted mediation.

For the past two days and nights we have been mediating under Mr. Arthur Meyer, Chairman of the State Mediation Board . . . a patient, experienced and able mediator. It has been impossible to reach an agreement. Mr. Meyer has tried to get the men back to work and the buses rolling again. But the officials of the union have persistently refused to allow the men to return to work unless their demands be met in advance. They have persistently refused to permit the public to ride, pending arbitration or other solution.

Now in keeping with the best American tradition and in the spirit of fair

play, we once more renew our offer to arbitrate.

On the return of our men to work under the old contract, we will submit to arbitration any question, any dispute that the Transport Workers Union want to take before the arbitrator . . . we, in turn, of course, to have the same right.

In order to put an end to misleading statements and misrepresentations, we declare publicly that at all times we have recognized the Transport Workers Union as the bargaining agency of the employees of our two companies. We, further, publicly declare that we will continue in any new agreement to operate under a closed shop.

This is our offer, made in all honesty and sincerity.

## IS IT FAIR?

We hope that our employees will accept it.

**FIFTH AVENUE COACH CO. • NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORP.**

The *Journal and American*, in its headline, achieved the neat trick of combining both rumors:

## GUARDS HINTED FOR BUSES AS STRIKE WAVERS

The story under this head carried a statement by Ritchie denying the rumors that the companies planned to resume operations with strikebreakers on Monday. But the *Journal and American* refused to let the story die there: "The rumors persisted, however, that service might be resumed after Monday and that a large quantity of wire screening had been ordered by the bus firms to be placed over windows as protection from missiles."

Students of the subject of labor relations in the United States could reflect on the fact that all the ads ran to an estimated cost of \$41,000. The companies' own estimate of what would be saved yearly on Fifth Avenue Coach by

Elimination of paid holidays was	\$13,196.00
Elimination of sick benefits	7,500.00
<hr/>	
The total is	\$20,696.00

or a little more than half of what the three ads probably cost!

The cost of the three ads, plus what was paid to the advertising agency, must have been higher than the amount that would have been saved in a year by one-man operation of the buses after 7:00 P.M. Yet that was one of the companies' counter-demands that led to the strike.

The companies and their allies were using every weapon they could to isolate the strikers. The Union, from the beginning, was doing all it could to defeat this maneuver. The daily flood of mes-

sages of encouragement and support to Transport Hall was an indication that the Union was succeeding in its efforts.

Some of the letter-writers enclosed money, too. Lillian Hellman, famous playwright, sent best wishes and a check for twenty-five dollars. Charles Connolly, editor of the *Irish Echo*, sent twenty dollars. From a small group of fur workers in one shop, members of the Fur and Leather Workers Union, CIO, came a money order for five dollars with this note to Mike Quill:

In collecting nickels to wire our support of your splendid action, the response was so wholehearted that we wound up with a surplus. We therefore enclose a money order for the balance of our collection to be used for your strike fund.

Another letter to Quill, from Baltimore, read:

Dear Mr. Quill:

It was very naughty and inconsiderate of you to take your transport workers out on strike and make all those nice people walk to work; and anyway, the idea that transport workers should be paid wages commensurate with a higher and ever rising cost of living belongs in Slovensk and not in New York. Finally, I enclose one buck for the strike kitty, and wish you 250% success.

In Room B at headquarters, John Keane sat at the telephone from 7:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. handling all messages concerning Fifth Avenue Coach. At 4:00 P.M. Dan Rauhauser relieved him. Here are two pages from Dan's log:

March 15, 1941

5th Ave. Coach

Kantelenher reporting from 32nd St. and 5th Ave. wants 2 men for reliefs. I referred this to Al Snyder who said I should tell them a car would be down to pick them up and bring them to TWU headquarters where they will check in. Time 7:05 P.M.

A man phoned at 7:12 P.M. and said he was Mr. John Q. Citizen and wanted to know if it was true that the Fifth Ave Coach Co. was going to take the conductors off the busses, he said, because he phoned the coach company and they denied it. I told him it was true and asked him to phone back to the Fifth Ave Coach Co. and tell them. He said he certainly would, and he is going to call them a bunch of dirty liars.

A Mr. Mennen phoned at 7:29 P.M. asking how the men are who are on strike. I told him they are one hundred per cent strong and their morale was high. He said keep it up, he was for us and knows we are going to win. I thanked him for calling and was glad to hear he is with us.

Gilmartin from the Queens division of the Independent subway phoned at 9:10 P.M. asking to speak to Mr. Grogan. I told him Mr. Grogan was not here, he then asked me how everything was, and said his division was 99 per cent organized and full cooperation for us. I told him we are 100 per cent strong and we are going to stay that way till Victory reigns for us.

John Smith reporting from 135th St. and Bway.—he would like to know if it is possible to have a car sent up there for the evening. I referred this message to Albert Snyder down in the Auditorium who took care of the matter. Time 9:25 P.M.

Dan Rauhauser

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 16

*The Seventh Day* The men had been out for a whole week, mediation had broken down, and Arthur Meyer was on his way back to Florida; the newspapers were featuring reports of disaffection and division in the ranks, with a back-to-work movement to come. A few of the wise boys at the press table were whispering that this meeting would be unlike the others—a reaction had already set in with the inevitable breakdown of morale.

Many strikers, accompanied by their wives and children, came directly from church to the mass meeting at the Windsor. As they walked into the hall it was obvious that the mood of the gathering was, indeed, different from that of previous rallies. Less of a

good-natured spirit prevailed. The men were not boisterous as on previous occasions. Was it a mood of resignation, of defeat?

The answer came as soon as the leaders strode up to the platform. Loud cheering, tremendous applause, whistling, hurraing, and stamping of feet—this was their welcome from the rank and file. This was not the behavior of beaten men. Those faces were



*Courtesy PM*

Families went from church to the meeting. They loved it.

grim, not out of despair, but out of determination. The strikers' Irish was up.

When Hogan opened with "All attempts by the newspapers, politicians, and reactionaries have not weakened the strike," he was reporting a fact that was plain as soon as the meeting had been called to order. By the time it was over, anybody could see that far from being weakened the strike was stronger than ever. Soberly and sensibly the men faced the prospect of a long-drawn-out battle. They were ready for it.

*Hogan:* The enemy press will never smash the Union of the strikers.

*Strikers:* It never will. (Cheers, boos for the *Mirror*.)

*Hogan:* They're whispering that some of the boys are a little short of change.

*Strikers:* So what. We can take it.

*Hogan:* If anyone in this city thinks for a moment that the Transport Workers Union is without a stocking full of cash, he's mistaken. We'll go down the line with every dollar this Union can produce. And if in the course of a month or two the change in this Union runs a little short, there are 500,000 CIO members in this city that won't permit this Union to go down. And if that's not enough, there are 5,000,000 CIO members in this country and they'll go down the line.

The companies' offer of different terms to the men on the two lines, Hogan charged, was a device to split the workers. "All such attempts to divide us have failed and will fail miserably," he said. "You bet they will! We'll stick together!" was shouted in reply.

When the first announcement of the possibility of strikebreakers running the buses had been mentioned in the press, many subway workers had come to the leaders at Transport Hall to argue that the subway men should be called out too. To the shouts, now, of "Call the IRT out," Matt Kearns, the next speaker, answered:

We're going to have better working conditions and a raise in pay regardless of how long we have to stay out.

We will not ask the IRT or BMT or Independent Subway men to win the strike for us. We'll do the job ourselves. We're out to win, fellows. Long live the Transport Workers Union!"

Deafening applause.

John Santo began, as always, by taking off his coat and rolling up his sleeves. (This ritual is never broken. When Santo forgets, the crowd reminds him.) Then he related the story of Arthur Meyer's unsuccessful attempt to settle the strike. How he had disregarded doctor's orders and flown up from Miami; how he had done all an experienced, patient, wise man could do; and "today he left this town a weary and fearful man, blaming the companies for not yielding an inch."

He pointed out that the Union had made concessions. By the companies' own figures it had reduced its demands from \$3,250,000 to \$1,000,000. He emphasized that the Union had not consented to arbitration that included the possibility of a cut in pay, nor would it. "Any union would be crazy to arbitrate whether its members should suffer a wage cut."

Next he turned his attention to the press attacks.

We never knew until now that there could be such a symphony of hate for the laboring man as newspapers, controlled by big money, have shown in the strike. They are itching and aching to put us in jail and crucify us. They are itching and aching to defeat every effort for an American way of life, that is, a decent standard of living.

Then Santo read a wire from John L. Lewis:

STRIKING MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION. I EXTEND MY BEST WISHES FOR THE SUCCESS OF YOUR STRIKE AGAINST THE FIFTH AVENUE COACH COMPANY AND THE NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORPORATION. YOUR CONTINUED UNITY MUST AND WILL BRING VICTORY.

That's what the strikers thought, too. When Santo had finished reading the telegram, they rose in their seats and cheered again and again. It was a tremendous ovation.

Other pledges of support and encouragement were read. Then announcement was made of a Ladies' Auxiliary meeting for strikers' mothers, wives, and daughters on Wednesday, the 19th. Applause greeted a second announcement, that a special meeting of the CIO Industrial Union Council had been called for Thursday to mobilize active support of the strike by every CIO union in the city. A plan was revealed for convening on Friday a special strike conference, to which representatives of fraternal societies, churches, clubs, AFL and CIO unions would be invited. The TWU was preparing for a long fight.

Mrs. Mary Harrington, whose husband and son were both on strike, made a short speech in which she referred to the letters that had been sent to the strikers' homes: "We don't want Ritchie's mail, we want his money." The crowd liked that.

In Room B at strike headquarters Dan Rauhauser was writing in his log:

*Vahey reporting from Jackson Heights, wanting to know how the meeting was going. I told him I just arrived from the meeting to relieve John Keane at the telephone so he could get in some of the meeting. I told him the meeting was not over yet but the men's spirit is stronger than ever, the hall was jammed and even a lot of women were there and they're hollering to bring down Ritchie, LaGuardia, and they want the Mirror reporter thrown out. I told him any further news I get I will let him know. Time, 3:58 P.M.*

Harry Sacher, on the platform at the Windsor, was discussing further the subject of arbitration. "Boiled down," he said, "Mr. Ritchie wanted to arbitrate whether the men shall eat more or eat less, whether they will wear more or wear less, or will have to move from their present homes to the slums that the City of New York is not removing."

Then Sacher reported that a poll of public opinion taken by the Union in the past week showed that 13 per cent of the people were against and 87 per cent for the TWU (loud prolonged cheers, whistling, shouting).

From Rauhauser's log:

*Joe Van Slet, number 3 division conductor, phoned at 4:12 P.M., asking if the meeting was over yet. I told him it was still going and the men's spirit is higher than ever. He said he had a bad cold and he thinks it's a touch of the grippe and he would not be able to come down today—he would try to be in tomorrow. I told him to take good care of his cold and try and let us know tomorrow about it.*

Any one entering the Windsor at that moment would have guessed he was at a political convention. "Quill, Quill, we want Quill"—men, women, and children, all decked out in their Sunday best, were shouting as they paraded up and down the aisles. Strikers whistled, pounded chairs, and threw their hats in the air.

Quill is our leader,  
We shall not be moved,

they sang as they marched round the room. In front of the procession and here and there throughout the line, picket signs, bearing the Union slogan: UNITED—INVINCIBLE, were held high.

For a whole week Mike Quill had been castigated in the press as few other labor leaders have been. The strikers were showing what their own feelings were toward the man who had borne the brunt of the vicious attack on the strike and on the TWU. They loved him.

One picket captain stepped out of the procession long enough to say to a friendly reporter, "I wasn't interested in the men at the top—I knew they could not be moved. I was interested in the man at the bottom—and he has not been moved either."

The demonstration lasted over eight minutes.

When quiet was restored, Quill said:

You have not been demonstrating for one man or ten men—but for the great TWU and the strike. . . .

[On strikebreakers] What would you do if a thief came into your home to steal your food? What would you do if a thief came into your home to steal your clothes? . . .

We call on the Mayor of the City of New York not to give police protection to scabs, because operation of buses with scabs can result only in trouble, and we hope the Police Department will not be the cause of that trouble. . . .

The Mayor and the Police Department are the servants of the people of New York and not the stooges of employers trying to break strikes. This is a sufficient warning and an honest warning. We do not want trouble. Should they start rolling buses, they will start trouble.

Should they start trouble, and one of our members gets killed, we might have a public funeral attended by all labor. God help our enemies if they give us such a public funeral of one of our members.

No violence had been the plea of every other speaker. It was Quill's plea too. When a striker interrupted at one point to shout, "We'll toss any buses that roll into the Harlem River," Quill replied immediately, "No, we won't. We don't need the Harlem River. We need what we have right here—the unity of the workers."

The audience, predominantly Irish, cheered long and loud at his reference to the parade next day. "We will celebrate the birthday of a great worker, a great friend of labor and a great Saint—St. Patrick. St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland and we must help him see to it tomorrow that no snakes drive those Fifth Avenue buses."

Then he told them of the plans for the parade. They had been invited to participate as a unit and could wear their uniforms and TWU armbands, but they were not to carry banners or make any demonstrations on the march. Particularly, he warned, there must be no booing when the contingent passed the reviewing stand at 64th Street and Fifth Avenue, where Mayor LaGuardia would be. The Union, he went on, would have its committeemen along the line of march to remove any one who acted in an undisciplined manner.

The cheering and stamping grew in volume again when he told the strikers that they had the support of the workers of New York. "They will join us in the fight if necessary. We have been speaking to the peace groups, the youth groups, parent-teacher groups, political clubs, union locals, and others; and we know they will help us when we call on them."

Lest there be any doubt about the will of the 3500 strikers, Quill put the question to them, "Does anyone care to go back to work on the companies' terms? Let him stand up."

The hall was quiet. No striker stirred. Then shouts of "Never! Never!"

"Are we prepared to continue our strike, if necessary, for days, for weeks, or for months?"

The uproar of approval was the most convincing answer to the wise boys who, before the meeting had opened, had whispered stories of broken morale.

From Rauhauser's log:

5:30 P.M.—Mrs. O'Reilly phoned, asking that her husband, conductor number 3 division, be excused because their boy is very sick with pneumonia. She said she would phone tomorrow to let us know when he would be in as she was up all night with her



*Courtesy PM*

little boy and her husband was out on picket duty. I referred this message to Dan O'Neill who said it was OK.

5:45 P.M.—Tim Murphy, reporting from 54th Street Garage, wants six men for picket duty. I referred this to Dan O'Neill who said he would send the men right over.

11:30 P.M.—I left word with the telephone operator if Matt Kearns phones switch him to room B. She did as I asked and I spoke to Matt in regard to the parade tomorrow. Asked him whether the boys should wear their uniforms or not and Matt said uniforms by all means. I referred this information to Jackson Heights, 135th Street and Broadway, and 54th Street Garage.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## MONDAY, MARCH 17

*The Eighth Day* "Felicitations, brother, how are you? This is John Keane speaking." While the strike was on, everybody who phoned TWU headquarters from 7:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. on Fifth Avenue business got that cheerful reply.

John Keane, veteran of the 1916 trolley car strike, was on duty in Room B. He had been with the Fifth Avenue Coach Company since 1923—fifteen years as a driver and the last three as a conductor. When the phone wasn't ringing and he had a moment to relax, John spoke out of his experience on the job:

The trouble is that a conductor has too much activity and a driver has too little. I was born a healthy man and could always eat good, but when I was driving I didn't get sufficient exercise. That's why I went conducting.

A conductor, now, doesn't have an easy time of it either. A great deal of walking up and down stairs, cold buses in the winter time, gas fumes, fearfully obnoxious. And with the increased speed of the buses, you've got to be more or less of an athlete to keep from colliding with the passengers.

My hours when I work are from 2:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. with a swing [time out between shifts] of an hour and three-quarters. That doesn't give me any time with my two children except on days off. And it's not too easy for four people to get along on my seventy-four cents an hour.

This morning John's earliest call came in at 7:25. The first page of his log is reproduced on page 105.

Two thousand strikers, dressed in their uniforms and wearing green TWU armbands, gathered at Transport Hall at noon to march in the St. Patrick's Day parade. The night before the strikers had been invited by John C. Mullane, Sr., the Grand Knight of the New York Chapter of the Knights of Columbus, to march as a unit behind the Knights of Columbus contingent.

But overnight something happened. Somebody spoke to somebody and another anti-union force was revealed in the person of John J. Sheahan, head of the parade committee, who announced that the strikers could not parade as a unit: "Of course, we told

them they could parade as Irishmen, provided they were not in uniform or with any other insignia which would identify them as members of the Union."

Mike Quill sized up the situation for the men at Transport Hall. "The fact that a few politicians don't like union men won't make us lose our faith in St. Patrick."



*Courtesy PM*

You can't keep an Irishman down on St. Patrick's Day.

In spite of Mr. Sheahan's disapproval, the men participated in the parade—some with other units, some in the late afternoon as a group. Many of them handed out special Union leaflets printed in green, urging support of the strike.

Mayor LaGuardia, in the reviewing stand, was asked by a reporter whether the buses would roll tomorrow. To this he replied, "You have been in the army. You know."

Nobody knew what to make of this statement, and he would not elaborate further. But Police Commissioner Valentine, asked a similar question at police headquarters, was less cryptic. This

question, written out, was sent in to him: "Is it true that 500 patrolmen are ready at any moment to ride buses operated during

March 17, 1941

5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Coach

Bro Sherin phoning from Fort George asks me to inform Picket Captain at 135 St. Germain, to send 2 picket signs to them Time 7:25 hr.

Bro Gulhams reporting from 135 St. Germain states that everything up there is 100%. I informed him that 2 picket men at Fort George requires picket signs, He will send them right away. Time 7:45 hr.

Bros O'Connor and Mc Kenna reporting from Jackson Hgts. states everything out there is ok. They have 15 pickets there. The weather is clearing up but there he says. Time 8:30 am.

Driver Mc Mahon phoned to enquire as to the time they were expected to report for the Palade. I told him 12:30 Pm at Union H. grs. Time 9:50 am.

Miss Fleming called in stating that her Father Conductor Fleming is sick and unable to picket today. I excused him, as he wishes to go to his Union Doctor. Time 10:50 am.

the TWU walkout, or is there any other considerable number of patrolmen ready to do so? If so, is there any special detail for this purpose?"

Written reply by Commissioner Valentine: "Orders have been written and are ready to be placed on the teletype machine if and when the buses resume operation. We are prepared to adequately cover the routes and if necessary I will assign a patrolman to each bus."

Almost every newspaper that reported this incident pointed out that in all probability the Commissioner would not have made such a statement without the knowledge of Mayor LaGuardia.

The *Sun*, which vied with the *Mirror* for first place as the anti-strike paper, seized upon the incident to run a scare head calculated to encourage defeatism among the strikers:

## **BUSES MAY BE RUNNING SOON WITH POLICE TO PROTECT PUBLIC**

Union leaders, informed of Commissioner Valentine's statement, issued the following warning, signed by Austin Hogan:

We call to the attention of the people of the City of New York the fact that for the last eight days members of the Transport Workers Union have conducted a 100 per cent effective and 100 per cent peaceful strike against the New York City Omnibus and the Fifth Avenue Coach Companies. . . .

The introduction of strikebreakers undoubtedly will disrupt the peaceful status of the strike. Those in any way responsible for strikebreaking activities will have to shoulder the responsibility for such disruption.

In the *Journal and American* for Sunday this ad appeared:

**CHAUFFEURS** or garage workers. Apply Monday after 10 a.m. Room 31, 245 W. 14th.

A *PM* reporter, assigned today to investigate the mysterious ad, found 1500 applicants for the job. He wrote: "Everybody *guessed* who was responsible for the ad. But nobody *knew*, so only a few left the line."

From Edmund C. Collins, Secretary-Treasurer of the two struck companies, came this denial: "We have not advertised for any type of employee and nobody has advertised for us."

Very queer business.

But it all added up to propaganda for a back-to-work movement. That's what Joe Curran said in a statement announcing the special meeting of the Greater New York Industrial Union Council on Thursday.

The strike [was] provoked by the companies and political forces of New York City. . . .

Because the TWU is in the forefront this fight is directed not against the TWU alone, but against every trade union in the country. The strike is 100 per cent effective. Despite high-pressure propaganda to develop a back-to-work movement, the strikers are solid with no evidence whatsoever of disaffection in their ranks. The smear campaign against the strikers and their union has been to no avail, with all indications that the public is almost unanimously behind the strikers.

The first week of the strike brought an increase of nearly 3,000,000 passengers to the subways, the Board of Transportation reported today.

To make things easier for the increasing number of strikers who were giving speeches all over the city to various interested groups, the Educational Department of the TWU put out a mimeographed leaflet on

#### NOTES FOR SPEAKERS

##### WHY ARE THE BUS MEN OF FIFTH AVE. COACH AND THE N.Y.C. OMNIBUS ON STRIKE

The Fifth Ave. Coach Co. proposed to operate big double decker buses with one man.

They proposed a cut in pay (of four cents an hour).

They proposed to take away our paid sick-leave and paid holidays.

The New York City Omnibus proposed to take away paid holidays and paid sick leave.

They would like to reduce us to the days of company unionism. Some of the conditions under which the men now work.

They work long hours, they do extra work for which they are not paid, such as checking the bus, taking readings, turning in cash, etc. They work under severe nervous strain, and suffer health hazards.

*THE DEMANDS OF THE STRIKERS ARE REASONABLE. THEY WANT:*

The eight hour day;

An increase in wages to meet the rising cost of living and to make possible the shorter day without a cut in weekly earnings;

to keep two men on all double decker buses;

to keep and extend our sick leave, paid holidays and vacations to maintain their health and to give the public the best and safest service possible;

they want to have security for themselves and their families and to maintain a decent American standard of living;

they want to keep the union which has brought them so many improvements.

*CAN THE COMPANIES GIVE BETTER CONDITIONS*

For the last 19 years the Fifth Avenue Coach has paid out dividends at the rate of one-half million dollars a year. In addition, beginning with a stockholders equity of three million in 1920, this amount has now grown to more than ten millions in 1940.

The New York City Omnibus Co. earns a net profit of over two million dollars a year representing a return of almost 100% on the investment of its stockholders.

These remarkable records for earnings show that the companies are well able to give the employees the better conditions they ask.

*ARE THE STRIKERS AND THEIR LEADERS REASONABLE*

The employees went on strike only when the companies insisted upon taking away improvements they had gained in their previous contract, and refused to make any other reasonable counter proposals to those of the Union. Our negotiating committee agreed to a mediator, Mr. Meyer. Showing our good faith and desire to reach an agreement, the Union reduced its demands by over two-thirds (from \$3,243,000 as estimated by the companies, to \$1,000,000).

Still the companies refused to give us any improvements. Now they want to arbitrate in such a manner as to be sure ahead of time that they will not have to give the men any improvements. It was the men themselves who proposed the improvements demanded, they voted 100% for the strike and they are 100% solid behind the strike. Any attack on our leaders is simply an attack upon striking employees on Fifth Ave. and New York City Omnibus Co. and an attempt to break the strike.

Our leaders are doing what we want and instructed them to do.

### WE ASK FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING, SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT.

We thank you for your past support and request that you continue and extend this until we win a contract with improved pay and working conditions.

Some of the striking busmen who attended Mass yesterday morning were saddened to hear in church an attack on the strike and its leadership. Father Dolan of the Church of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Manhattan, is reported by several TWU members as having said: "We see a serious strike on the bus lines led by Communist leadership. This strike is another plot of Communism to disrupt public transportation and gain greater control."

In the next Mass the strike was attacked even more viciously than before. Two union members waited to protest to Father Dolan. They were admitted to his chamber after the second Mass. They pointed out the "true issues of the strike. You are injuring the cause of the busmen, and we don't think it's the proper thing for you to do," they told him.

Father Dolan wouldn't admit he was wrong, but he did consent to modify the sermons he would deliver later that day.

For several years the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists has been trying to gain a foothold in the TWU. It emerged originally as an opposition group—subtly disruptive. Dual unionism was not proposed at first. It gave lip service to the Union's program and achievements. The membership of the Union is predominantly Irish Catholic and the tactic of the ACTU has been to ap-

peal to them on a program of "The union is good—its leadership is bad." Candidates, not always identifying themselves openly as ACTU but acknowledging "leadership opposition," have run for office in several local elections. Beyond capturing one or two minor local offices and promoting a degree of disruption throughout Local 100, the ACTU has had little success.

After a time its tactics changed. As the Union became the subject of concentrated attack by reactionary forces, Patrick Sheehan, BMT employee and leader of the ACTU opposition, openly advocated the smashing of the TWU.

Then the ACTU inaugurated a double-barreled policy. On the privately owned transit lines where the closed shop prevails it used the slogan "oust the leaders"; on the city-owned lines it advocated the breaking-up of the TWU.

In line with its new policy, the ACTU organ, *The Labor Leader*, on March 10, 1941, charged that a demonstration of BMT workers called to act on a resolution demanding that the Board of Transportation negotiate a new contract with the TWU "was a fake and that over half the men there were not BMT workers at all, but Communists from the Department of Sanitation, International Workers Order, and the taxi division of the TWU."

This paper was distributed during the bus strike. Like some other activities of the ACTU, it added up to strikebreaking.

Rauhauser's log:

5:45 P.M.—Joe Kenny reporting from Jackson Heights wanting to know if we could excuse him as he wanted to go to a dance tonight. He said if it was impossible to excuse him he would stay on the job. I asked Matt Kearns if he could excuse him and Matt said we need him tonight.

8:00 P.M.—Joe Kenny reporting from Jackson Heights wants six or eight men for picket duty. He said the four men that are out there now are going home at 8 o'clock and that will leave him there alone. He also wants some shelter out there for the men as it is very cold and windy. I referred this to Albert Snyder

down in the auditorium who said he would take over that post and send a car out there for shelter.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 18

*The Ninth Day* The “Red” smear hadn’t produced results. Expensive full-page ads hadn’t poisoned the public mind against the strikers.

Hysterical newspaper editorials hadn’t shaken the confidence of the men in their leadership.

The threat of strikebreakers running the buses hadn’t created a back-to-work movement.

Attacks by the Mayor hadn’t shaken the strikers’ belief in the righteousness of their cause.

On the ninth day of the strike not a bus moved out of a struck garage. Pickets were still calmly and politely directing the public to other means of transportation. The strikers were solid, the strike unbreakable.

The TWU stood firm in its resolve not to agree to any settlement that included the possibility of a worsening of conditions. Arbitration? OK. But arbitration only of the Union demands upward—no consideration of any counter-demands by the companies. This was the Union position, not yet made public, but communicated on Saturday to Mr. Meyer and through him to the companies and to the Mayor.

At 2:00 P.M. today the Mayor walked into the Board of Estimate room and took a seat on the dais. With him were Mrs. Epstein, Comptroller Joseph D. McGoldrick, and Mrs. Anna Rosenberg, Regional Director of the Social Security Board. Ritchie, McCarthy, and Wright were there for the companies. The Union’s representa-

tives, summoned by the Mayor through Allan Haywood, were there with Haywood. In the Mayor's office technicians for Station WNYC were installing special equipment in readiness for a broadcast.

The Mayor read the following statement to the assembled group:

Once again I am submitting, this time publicly, a basis for a speedy settlement through the medium of arbitration. I have clarified the issues according to my understanding obtained through the many hours of conference from the parties directly involved and from the mediators.

Insofar as the situation concerning the New York Omnibus Company is involved, the employees should return to work and the union demands submitted to arbitration. . . . [Then a suggestion that since on the issues of paid holidays and sick leave there was agreement, they be settled by direct negotiations.]

As to the Fifth Avenue Coach Company, there the situation is somewhat more involved. Even then, I can think of nothing that cannot be settled through the medium of a fair and impartial arbitration.

The chief stumbling block, as I see it, seems to be the two-men crew on double-deckers. This question involves something more than the mere satisfactory arrangement between the two parties. It concerns the public and the public safety and comfort.

As Mayor, I would eliminate this question from arbitration with the understanding that existing conditions be maintained for at least one year. That in that time studies may be made, first for the absorption of the men in other suitable work, and secondly, which concerns the city, is the submission to the city of plans for the equipment and arrangements during the night and early morning hours when one-man operation would be effective. Therefore, this question for a year at least is entirely eliminated.

Again, as I see it, there is little difference as to what could be the final result of arbitration, and I again suggest either a settlement of this matter, or the submission of questions other than the two-men crew to arbitration, it being understood, of course, that the men return to work. It is also to be understood that any new conditions or terms as a result of arbitration would be effective as of the day the men return to work.

I believe the two parties can agree on an arbitrator. Failing to do that, the Mayor is ready to designate one acceptable to both sides.

In the event that these conditions are not accepted by one or the other party, or by both, the Mayor will appoint a fact-finding board of three members in whom this city will have complete confidence to ascertain the following:

- (1) Is there any issue that is not arbitrable?
- (2) Existing issues between the two parties to be defined by this board for submission to arbitration.
- (3) Elimination of all issues that have been clarified and agreed upon between the two parties.

It will be seen that first, here, is suggested arbitration to settle all disputes. Failing to accept that, a fact-finding body to make public the issues for direct settlement or for settlement by arbitration.

The Mayor indicated that immediately on the rejection of the plan by either side he would appoint the fact-finding board. It was evident that the Mayor assumed that this arbitration plan might be accepted by both sides immediately and an announcement to that effect could be broadcast at once. There was little doubt that the companies would accept the plan—it was practically what they had proposed themselves. Later in the day they announced their acceptance.

But the Union representatives were not ready to accept the scheme. There were certain obvious bad spots in it and other clauses that required further study. Under the plan, one-man operation of Fifth Avenue buses was staved off—but only for a year. New conditions as determined by the arbitrator “would be effective as of the day the men return to work.” This certainly wouldn’t do. The conditions must, of course, be retroactive to the expiration date of the old contract.

The negotiating committee went into a huddle with Haywood. Then he phoned Philip Murray who suggested that the committee come to see him at 3:30 at the Hotel Roosevelt. After his conference with the committee, Mr. Murray phoned the Mayor’s office and arranged for a meeting with him at 9:30 A.M. Wednesday.

Pledges of support continued to pour into Transport Hall. John Santo found a dime in the envelope which contained this letter:

March 16, 1941  
245 E. 34 St.

Dear. Brother, Santo

I was listening to my  
dad telling my mom about  
people sending money to help  
win our strike. I am sending  
you half of my allowance  
hoping it will help us win  
Yours truly  
John Christopher Curry Jr.  
My dad section 501 Fifth Ave.

And from Local 176 of the TWU in Louisville, Kentucky, came this telegram:

LOUISVILLE RAILWAY WORKERS WHO HAVE FOUGHT TO ORGANIZE IN TWU FOR THREE YEARS CHEER STRIKERS SPLENDID SOLIDARITY. YOUR VICTORY WILL HELP US WIN HERE.

The taxi division of the TWU distributed mimeographed leaflets to cabmen all over the city.



Victory for the TWU strengthens the Union and increases our ability to raise further our income.

The very existence of a stronger TWU checks the operators in their attempts to lower the commission rates and worsen our working conditions.

Shorter hours and longer vacations for bus drivers means more employment opportunities for more men in New York City.

A successful bus strike will be an inspiration to taxi drivers. Just remember that a few years ago bus men were getting only 52 cents an hour. Solid organization in the TWU has brought them up to 90 cents an hour. Unity and determination in this strike will win them more and will bring them a decent American wage under decent working conditions.

When all of us learn to stick together like the bus drivers - which is going to be real soon - our jobs, too, will bring us a fair wage for our day's work, and security of employment.

All hackmen have a stake in this struggle. The greater the success for the bus strikers, the more will we hackmen benefit in our efforts to regulate the industry and make it one in which we can earn a decent living.

Do your share to bring the case of the bus men to the public! Read the attached circular and pass it on to others! Every step the bus drivers and their supporters make on the picket line is a step for a better life for all of us!

Carry on under the TWU slogan:

uopwa #16 UNITED

INVINCIBLE!

The enlarged joint executive committee of all branches of the Union—some six hundred members—met tonight and heard a report of strike developments. The support of the entire New York local was pledged and plans were made for further mobilization of subway workers as relief pickets.

From the Keane-Rauhauser log:

- 10:25 A.M.—Brother P. O'Connor reports that yesterday about 2:15 P.M. a Sergeant from 34th Precinct, Wadsworth Ave. Station, claims that his car was hit by a stone, breaking a window in same, as he was driving south on Broadway at 135th Street. He spoke to Picket Captain O'Connor about it who stated he was sure none of the strikers threw a stone. This Sergeant informed his Lieutenant, and the Lieutenant informed the Captain who inquired from the cop on the post about it. The policeman on post duty stated to his Captain "that none of the men on strike threw a stone," that it must have come from the roof.
- 11:59 P.M.—Andy O'Connor reporting from Jackson Heights says it is cold out there and is having the pickets guard the garage doors from automobiles, as they are freezing from the cold and they want shelter and don't want to get sick. I told him as long as the garages are guarded by reliable men they should have all the shelter he can possibly give them as we need them there.
- 12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

*The Tenth Day* Tall, soft-spoken, gray-haired Philip Murray, fifty-four-year-old President of the CIO, attended his first strike meeting when he was six years old. Perched on the shoulders of one of the members, he heard the cheers as his father, President of the Lanarkshire local of the coal miners' union in Scotland, announced that the strike for a raise in pay had ended successfully.

Four years later Phil was down in the mines as his father's helper. In 1920, eighteen years after the family had emigrated to America, Philip Murray was elected International Vice-President of the United Mine Workers. "Wherever you find coal mining you find struggle, organization, the spirit and the strength to fight

for economic justice," said Philip Murray last year. What Philip Murray did not learn about the fight for economic justice from his own experience of many years in the mines, he learned from his quarter of a century of association with his chief, John L. Lewis, the President of the United Mine Workers.

For fifteen minutes this afternoon, at a conference in the Mayor's office, this mine worker who had never completed elementary school gave a lecture on the principle of arbitration in labor disputes which no college professor could have equaled. His audience included the Mayor, Mrs. Epstein, Anna Rosenberg, Mr. McGoldrick, the companies' representatives, Allan Haywood and the Union spokesmen.

In clear moving terms Mr. Murray explained why, in times like these when the cost of living was shooting upward, no Union could accept arbitration procedure that comprehended degradation of standards which the workers had already gained through struggle. His analysis was profound. It was a forceful, straightforward, honest presentation of the Union's case which should have convinced those who heard it.

At 4:45 P.M. the Mayor left his office for LaGuardia Airport. At 6:00 P.M. Mr. Murray issued a statement in which he incorporated some of the points he had made in his lecture. He set forth the Union's position and announced his endorsement of it. The full text of his statement is given below:

The Transport Workers officials, with Mr. Allan Haywood and myself, met with the Mayor and the representatives of the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company this afternoon at 2 o'clock. In the course of negotiations, I submitted to the conference the following proposition, representing the point of view of the representatives of the Transport Workers Union:

1. That any arbitral proposal suggested by the Mayor must necessarily exclude from the field of arbitration consideration of the following items:

- a. Reduction in the working force.
- b. Reduction in wages.
- c. Elimination of gains heretofore made through the process of collective bargaining, namely, the elimination of sick leave

with pay, elimination of holidays with pay, and reduction in vacation allowance.

2. That the Transport Workers Union submit for the consideration of the impartial arbiter the following proposals to amend existing wage agreements with the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company:

- a. That the Union's demands be submitted to arbitration, which in the case of the New York City Omnibus Corporation is a demand for increases and improvements amounting to \$750,000 and in the case of the Fifth Avenue Coach Co. amounting to \$250,000.
- b. That an arbitrator satisfactory to both sides be designated.
- c. That the award of the arbitrator shall be retroactive to March 1, 1941.

To clarify the position of the Union upon these constructive suggestions, it would be well for the public to understand that the Union herein agrees to accept the services of an impartial arbitrator upon this basis. The attitude of the Union in the submission of these proposals was supported by the Mayor of the City in that he stated that it never was his intention to have submitted to an arbitrator questions which might tend to degrade wages or conditions of employment. Unfortunately the representatives of the New York City Omnibus Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Coach Company refused to accept these proposals.

It is extremely unfortunate that the companies should insist upon the Union accepting arbitration to reduce living standards and worsen conditions of employment at a time when living costs are soaring and when the definite trend throughout the nation indicates higher wages to meet the already higher living costs. The action of the companies in this instance, under existing circumstances, is unprecedented, and I am quite sure will not be supported by public opinion.

The representatives of the Transport Workers Union are hopeful that the Mayor may be able to persuade the representatives of these companies of the need of accepting these very conservative demands of the Transport Workers Union. It is my understanding that the Mayor intends to press further consideration of the Union's proposals before the officials of these companies tomorrow. In the meantime the representatives of the Transport Workers Union, together with Mr. Allan Haywood, National CIO Director,

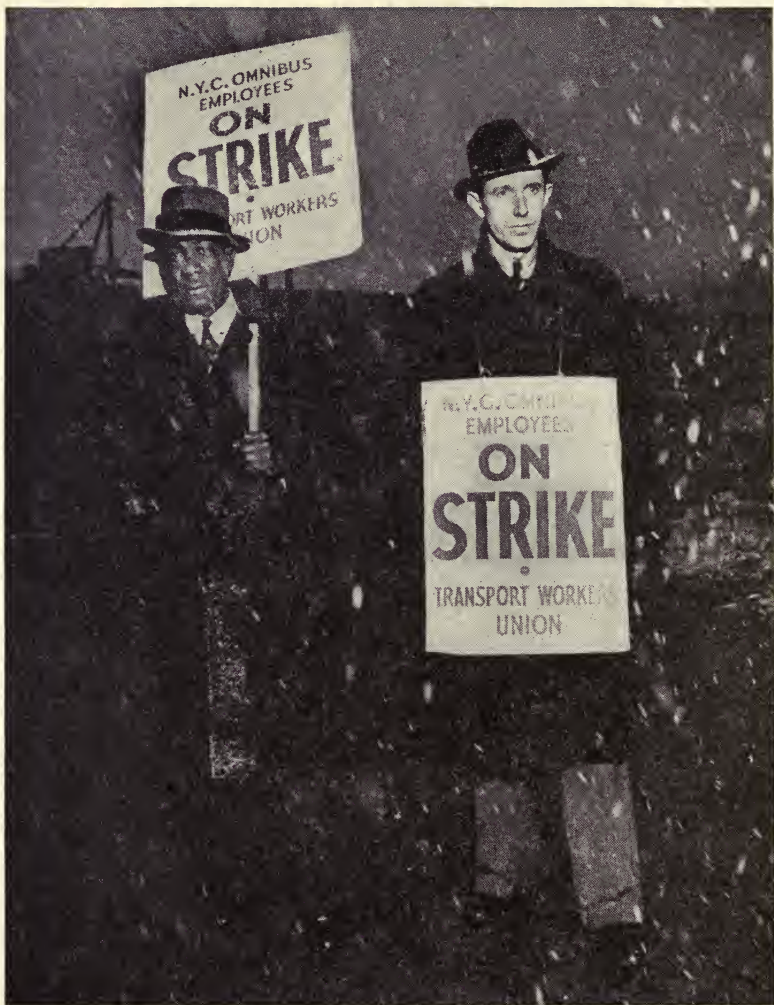
stand ready to meet with Mayor LaGuardia and the representatives of these companies to continue consideration of the present controversy on the basis above set forth at the convenience of the Mayor and the representatives of the companies.

It is incomprehensible that any labor organization should be expected under existing conditions prevailing throughout the nation to accept any kind of arbitrational arrangement which comprehends a lowering of the standards of living. In these circumstances, I take occasion to affirm the support of the CIO, including each of our organizations and its national officers to the Transport Workers Union in this situation. We naturally pledge them our moral and financial assistance.

It is important to note that the Union position as outlined here and endorsed by Mr. Murray was practically identical with that offered to the companies and the Mayor through Mr. Meyer on Saturday. When the Saturday proposal was offered directly to the Mayor this afternoon, his reply, according to the Union representatives, was that the proposal was "impossible, insane, unthinkable, unacceptable." (Later events proved it was none of these things. The Mayor's fact-finding board adopted the Union proposal almost in its entirety. It was the plan which settled the dispute.)

The one note on which the companies, the Mayor and the press had harped throughout the strike was arbitration—"the companies are willing to adopt this sensible sane way of settling the dispute but the Union is not." This was not true. The Union's proposal of Saturday was an arbitration plan. The Union had not rejected all arbitration, as the editorials were howling. It had, indeed, emphatically rejected one kind of arbitration—the kind suggested by the companies and approved by the Mayor and the press, the kind which encompassed consideration not only of the Union's demands but of the companies' counter-demands as well. But the Union had not rejected arbitration which encompassed consideration of its demands alone.

What had been slurred over in all the attacks on the Union's position was that the question of *what is to be arbitrated* was basic. Arbitrate the question of the demand for increases in pay on both



*Courtesy PM*

TWU Constitution: ". . . membership in the Transport Workers Union of America, without regard to sex, race, color, or religion or political beliefs . . ."

lines amounting to \$1,000,000? "Yes, we're willing," said the Union. But arbitrate the question of the counter-demand for one-man operation or cuts in pay? "Never," said the Union. That was the Union's position one week after the strike began. That was the Union's position at the end of the strike. That was, finally, the terms under which the strike was concluded.

One half-hour after Mr. Murray's statement had been issued, Boykin Wright read to reporters at City Hall Ritchie's answer for the companies. When he had finished he talked to Mayor LaGuardia by phone, then returned and asked the reporters to strike out one section of his statement. The deleted part is italicized in the text below:

We stated again to the Mayor that we are willing to accept his proposal of yesterday—that is, to arbitrate both contracts on precisely the basis proposed by the Mayor. In other words we stand squarely upon our acceptance of the Mayor's proposal.

The transport workers' union is again trying to confuse the issue and to mislead the public. As we understand it, the union is not willing to accept the proposal made yesterday by the Mayor. They have suggested changes and modifications which entirely alter that proposal. This action of the union is clearly tantamount to a flat rejection of the offer publicly made by the Mayor of the City of New York.

At the conference this afternoon at which Messrs. Murray and Haywood headed the union representatives, we again repeated to the Mayor our offer to extend for a year the existing Fifth Avenue contract, with all its present terms, including two weeks vacation, present sick benefits and four holidays with pay. Therefore, it is entirely contrary to fact for the union representatives to say or to insinuate that we are insisting upon a wage reduction or a change in working conditions on either Fifth Avenue or New York Omnibus Corporation.

As to arbitration, our position has been and remains that if the Fifth Avenue contract is not to be extended for a year but instead is to be arbitrated, we must have the right to present the full picture to the arbitrator and that we, like the union, shall preserve the right to present our counter demands to the arbitrator, *which counter demands include the request that the Fifth Avenue Coach*

*Co. be allowed to put into effect operating economies totaling \$167,000 a year. It will be remembered that the initial demands of the union in the case of the Fifth Avenue Coach Co. were for increases totaling \$1,200,000 to be superimposed upon a present operating deficit.* If the controversy as to the Fifth Avenue contract is to go to arbitration, then obviously it is only fair that both sides should have an opportunity to present their full case. The union asks that we give up entirely our counter demands and leave for arbitration only their demands. This would be a travesty upon what we understand to be arbitration.

We appreciate very much the sincere and patient efforts which Mr. Philip Murray has made to bring about a solution which would enable the buses to resume operations at once. We regret that his efforts have been unavailing and we realize the handicap under which Mr. Murray inevitably suffered, coming into this situation at this time. If the union had had the benefit of Mr. Murray's safe counsel and advice on Monday, March 10, we are entirely confident that this unwarranted and unjustified strike would never have taken place.

There are several interesting and important observations to be made on this statement of the companies. They say that they stand by the Mayor's proposals of yesterday—to arbitrate both contracts on the basis he outlined. They insist that arbitration on Fifth Avenue must include consideration of their counter-proposals as well as of the Union demands; to do otherwise "would be a travesty upon what we understand to be arbitration." But the Mayor's proposal of yesterday, which they "stand by" today, suggested exactly that "travesty" in the case of Omnibus!

The deleted part indicates that the companies—if Fifth Avenue was to be arbitrated—were still pressing their counter-demands for either one-man operation or a wage-cut—one or the other "economy" was necessary to save the \$167,000 mentioned.

The Mayor's statement in answer to the Murray proposal was issued later in the evening. It is a very curious document:

I have just heard the statement made by Mr. Philip Murray and by the representatives of the two bus companies.

I cannot for the world understand how there can be any such

wide difference as to the existing issues. Many of the issues raised by Mr. Murray simply do not exist.

1. There is no reduction of the employees force at issue. The present personnel is to continue. I made that clear yesterday. Repeating it doesn't change the situation.

2. There is no issue on sick leave. That is practically agreed to at this very moment.

3. There is no issue of holiday pay. That, too, has been settled. Both sick leave and holiday pay have been taken out of arbitration. That has been agreed to.

4. There is no issue of reduction of vacations. That has been withdrawn by the company.

I stated that as the issues are now joined I did not see how present wages could be reduced by arbitration.

There are no counter-demands in the case of the New York Omnibus Company.

Renewal of existing terms in the Fifth Avenue Coach case has been offered.

Now, where can there be any possibility of reduction of wages in arbitration?

The only thing now is to let the fact-finding board formulate the issues which should go to arbitration. The board will be able to start tomorrow morning.

I see no difficulty in a settlement if the efforts are sincere.

I said in the beginning and I say now: "The strike was unnecessary." It could have been settled just as easily without the men going out on strike.

This attempt by the Mayor to pooh-pooh Mr. Murray's proposal doesn't stand up. He tries to make it appear as though Mr. Murray is making a big fuss over nothing at all; yet there was enough difference between the Mayor's proposal and the Murray plan to make the companies accept one and reject the other.

When the Mayor says, "Many of the issues raised by Mr. Murray simply do not exist," he is glossing over the fact that the big issue of whether or not Fifth Avenue was to get the same treatment as Omnibus did exist. Arbitrate Omnibus upward while giving Fifth Avenue either the old contract or the possibility of worsening conditions was not a solution that the Union would

accept no matter how much the Mayor roared that everything was hunky-dory.

What part did the Mayor play in the deletion of that important section of the companies' statement? Under the circumstances in which the cut was made it was apparent that at least he was consulted about it. It may have been his suggestion. The effect of the deletion was to make the companies' argument appear more reasonable. Was it necessary for the "labor-loving" Mayor to save face for the companies and for himself?

The fact-finding board, which was to report to the public on the issues of the strike, was appointed by Mr. LaGuardia after his statement was issued. Two of its members, William S. Menden, ex-President of the BMT, and Thomas E. Murray, Jr., ex-receiver of the IRT, were well-known to the TWU. The Union had had dealings with both these gentlemen in the past in their capacities



*Courtesy PM*

The Ladies' Auxiliary backed the strike to the last stitch.

as employers on the subway systems. The third member of the board, Noel T. Dowling, Nash professor of law at Columbia University, was unknown to the TWU.

Mike Quill's comment when the names were announced was a terse sentence: "We merely wish to observe that there is no labor representative on the board."

At a mass meeting at Transport Hall attended by over 1000 mothers, wives and daughters of strikers, Quill elaborated further that two of its members "belong to the bankers, the employers, and we cannot expect any good to come from that."

This meeting was the second sponsored by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the TWU during the strike. At the first meeting, one week before, about 500 were present. Both meetings were very successful—the necessity for their men winning pay increases and shorter hours was something these women easily understood. And they came out to learn how they could become more active in the struggle to win.

Many Auxiliary members did their bit from the start. They had their own picket captain who gave them assignments in the picket line at each garage every day between 11:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Their committees functioned regularly, explaining the issues to strikers' wives, and helping with the distribution of leaflets. They had perfected plans to visit and assist financially any strikers who needed aid. Their work was of invaluable assistance in the winning of the strike.

All the papers printed letters from their readers almost every day. The anti-union letters predominated, of course—it was an anti-union editor that made the selection—but occasionally a few pro-union letters were run. An interesting one from a Mr. Joseph Clark of Brooklyn appeared in the *World-Telegram*:

As one of that mythical public you speak about I want to say that the demands of the bus drivers seem eminently fair. They have pointed to the enormous dividends paid out to the owners of the bus companies. They are faced with rising living costs. They ask for higher wages and better working conditions. That, it seems to me, is eminently American.

Most of us who ride the bus system are workers and many of us good union members. If the bus drivers win their strike it will help workers in all walks of life to get better conditions, so as to meet the higher cost of living. That's why the public supports the bus strikers.

And calling the bus drivers Communists won't hurt them and will only help the Communists. If you identify every struggle for equity and justice with Communism you give tremendous help to the Communists.

And another letter in the same paper from Mr. Sigmund Gott-  
lober:

If the striking men of the New York Omnibus Co. had demanded the employment of another 1000 men public sympathy would be theirs. Besides driving the bus, the man must give change, issue transfers (again change), answer questions, duck pedestrians and ask passengers not to leave through the front door. This is too much for one man and dangerous to the riding public; whereas an additional man in the back of the bus could do all of the busman's chores except the driving.

Often a bus is crowded and two busses behind are half filled. With an additional man on the bus he could see what is doing in the busses so he can direct the prospective passengers not to crowd into the first bus but to take the two other busses behind.

Reports in the papers state that the Omnibus Co. made two million dollars profit, hence it should not only compromise with the union but do away with the transfer charge, employ 1000 more men, and upon the Mayor's prevailing on the Omnibus Co., the Third Ave. Street Car Line and the other crosstown bus companies also issue free reciprocal transfers.

This is an appropriate time to accomplish improvements for the benefit of the public, the employees and the transportation companies.

This morning at 9:30 A.M. Maurice Forge, editor of the *Transport Bulletin*, got a phone call from a Mrs. Rose Meltzer of Brooklyn. She wanted to know what to do about getting over to Ward's Island, where she went regularly to visit her son, a patient at the hospital there. The bus which made the trip from 124th Street and Lexington Avenue to the Island was on strike. She had no car and

could not afford a cab. Forge arranged for her to go to the picket station at 100th Street and Lexington Avenue where two strikers took her over in a car. They waited an hour until her visit was concluded, then drove her back.

Items from the Keane-Rauhauser log:

- 9:10 A.M.—Bro. Webber reporting from Jackson Heights Terminal states that everything is 100 per cent. It was a good thing, he says, they got an empty store yesterday for the boys, for it's bitter cold. He states they started getting them some hot coffee today to keep them cheerful.
- 4:10 P.M.—Saturday night March 15, 1941, between 9 and 10 P.M. Duignan, O'Shea and Fredkin were checking all bars and grills from 125th St. and Broadway east to Amsterdam Avenue, north to 145th Street, west to Broadway, south to 135th Street in Fredkin's car. They found only one of our men in a Bar and Grill at 125th Street and Broadway. Mr. Duignan persuaded him to go home which he did. This was reported to me by Fredkin this afternoon.
- 5:00 P.M.—Jim Geraghty asked me to get in touch with the Picket Captain at 135th St. and Broadway as he would like to speak to him. I phoned the Picket Captain at 135th Street who is Phillip Smith, and Jim spoke to him about giving the men all the coffee and doughnuts they want. We do not want to spare anything—give the men anything they want.
- 8:00 P.M.—Miss Minnie Rauhauser phoned at 8 P.M. to let me know the condition my Mother was in as Doctor Dawson of the Harkness Pavilion of the Medical Center was up to see her.
- 9:14 P.M.—Stanley Fredkin phoned wanting to know how things went down at City Hall today. I told him no dice so far, but we are going to keep at him till he gives in.
- 12:00 P.M.—The unblemished record of no disorder was broken today for the first time. Two cops, detailed to watch a picket line, got drunk and began to create a disturbance. The pickets took them home. Strike 100 per cent effective.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 20

*The Eleventh Day* The fact-finding board performed its task. It found out the facts and made its report in the presence of the Mayor and the representatives of the companies and the Union. Professor Dowling read it:

As the Mayor has repeatedly stated:

"1. There is no reduction of the employees' force at issue. The present personnel is to continue. I made that clear yesterday. The repeating it does not change the situation.

"2. There is no issue on sick leave. That is practically agreed to at this very moment.

"3. There is no issue of holiday pay. That, too, has been settled. Both sick leave and holiday pay have been taken out of the arbitration. That has been agreed to.

"4. There has been no reduction of vacations. That has been withdrawn by the company."

The only issue left concerns the wage scale of the Fifth Avenue Company and the extent of that issue has been narrowed to the question whether or not arbitration shall begin with the present wage scale. Acceptance of that basis is included in the companies' offer to renew the contract which recently expired. It is the opinion of your committee that arbitration on this basis will permit both sides to present their case and lead to any equitable settlement as to the merits.

Though the report was made to sound like a victory for the Mayor's position, actually *it was a complete victory for the Union*. On the hotly-contested point of whether or not the companies' counter-demands on Fifth Avenue were to be arbitrated along with the Union's demands, the Union prevailed.

No more convincing proof could have been obtained that the Union's position was well-taken. The board had been appointed by the Mayor, who had sided with the companies from the start; it was composed, as Quill had observed, of no representatives from labor. Yet this board, after probing into the dispute, found a formula for settlement which was identical with that proposed by

the Union on the previous Saturday, and by Philip Murray on Wednesday.

When the board first read its formula, Harry Sacher said: "Gentlemen, we have carried this document [the Union offer of Saturday] in our pockets for six days. We offered it to Mr. Meyer. We said then that this would be the basis of the final settlement. So we may understand what your formula is, will you now accept this agreement? Will the companies now sign it?"

He handed copies to Ritchie and the board members.

Mr. Ritchie said, "Yes, we will sign it."

This was the proposal which, only yesterday, the Mayor had called "impossible, insane, unacceptable."

Turn back to the text of that proposal on page 89. Read it and compare it with the agreement signed today on the basis of the fact-finding board's report:

AGREEMENT between NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORPORATION, MADISON AVENUE COACH COMPANY, INC., and EIGHTH AVENUE COACH CORPORATION, Parties of the First Part, and TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA, Party of the Second Part,

#### WITNESSETH

WHEREAS, a collective bargaining agreement between the Parties of the First and Second Part governing the wages, hours and working conditions of the employees of the Parties of the First Part expired on the 28th day of February, 1941; and

WHEREAS, the Party of the Second Part now demands that the Parties of the First Part improve the wages, hours and working conditions of their employees at an additional cost of \$750,000 a year and a dispute has arisen between the parties out of said demand; and

WHEREAS, the Parties of the First Part insist that the wages, hours and working conditions of their employees set forth in the contract which expired on the 28th day of February, 1941, are fair and liberal and should be continued in the new contract.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of One (\$1.00) Dollar lawful money of the United States by each of the parties to the other in hand paid at or before the execution of this agreement,

and for other good and valuable consideration, the parties do hereby agree as follows:

1. The dispute between the parties arising out of the aforementioned demand made by the Transport Workers Union of America upon the Parties of the First Part shall be submitted to William H. Davis, as arbitrator, who shall have power only to determine what improvements, if any, shall be made in the wages, hours and working conditions of the employees of the Parties of the First Part over and above the wages, hours and working conditions provided for in the agreement between the parties hereto which expired on February 28, 1941, the cost of which improvements shall not in any event exceed the sum of \$750,000 a year commencing as of the 1st day of March, 1941.

2. Any improvements which may be awarded to the employees by the arbitrator shall be effective as of March 1, 1941.

3. The award of the arbitrator shall be binding on all parties hereto. The parties shall immediately upon the promulgation of said award enter into a written contract for a term commencing as of the 1st day of March, 1941, and terminating on the 30th day of April, 1942. Such contract shall contain all the provisions contained in the agreement which expired on February 28, 1941, except such provisions, if any, as may be improved by the award of the arbitrator and as to the latter provisions the same shall be superseded by the provisions contained in the award of the arbitrator.

4. It is agreed that full bus operation shall be resumed promptly after ratification of this agreement by the employees of the Parties of the First Part. Unless this agreement shall be ratified by the employees of the Parties of the First Part and written notice thereof given to the Parties of the First Part at or before noon of the 22nd day of March, 1941, this agreement shall be of no further force and effect.

NEW YORK CITY OMNIBUS CORPORATION

(signed) J. E. McCarthy President

MADISON AVENUE COACH COMPANY, INC.

(signed) J. E. McCarthy President

EIGHTH AVENUE COACH CORPORATION

(signed) J. E. McCarthy President

TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA

(signed) Michael J. Quill President

(The agreement for Fifth Avenue was identical except that the sum of \$250,000 was substituted. Madison Avenue Coach and Eighth Avenue Coach are subsidiaries of New York City Omnibus.)

The agreement established three important points:

1. The companies' original counter-demands for one-man operation, pay cuts, elimination of sick leave and paid holidays were tossed out the window. Score one for the Union.

2. The Union's demands for arbitration of possible improvements in hours, wages, and working conditions to the amount of \$250,000 on Fifth Avenue and \$750,000 on Omnibus, to be submitted to an arbitrator satisfactory to both sides, was included. Score two for the Union.

3. The award of the arbitrator was to be retroactive, not "to the day the men return to work," as the Mayor had proposed, but



*Wide World*

Signing the Agreement.

Left to right: Harry Sacher, Michael E. Quill, John E. McCarthy.  
Standing: Austin Hogan, Boykin Wright, John A. Ritchie,  
Allan Haywood, John Santo.

to March 1, 1941, as the Union had proposed. Score three for the Union.

After both sides had agreed on William H. Davis, former Chairman of the New York State Mediation Board and member of the National Defense Mediation Board, as arbitrator, the agreement was signed in the Mayor's office.

Statements were issued by both sides after the settlement. Ritchie said, "We are delighted that the men are to return to work and that the bus-riding public will no longer be inconvenienced. All along, before the strike and during the strike, we have urged that arbitration offered the only solution fair to the companies and the union and also fair to the public."

There was an important omission in this statement. It was true that Ritchie had urged arbitration all along, but he forgets to say arbitration of *what*. The kind of arbitration he finally agreed to was the kind he had previously called "a travesty."

Allan Haywood expressed his satisfaction with the settlement:

The agreement sustains the principles declared for by the CIO in resisting arbitration downwards in these times. It is a great victory and is a realization of the views expressed by President Philip Murray of the CIO, who asked me to make this statement on his behalf. The issue involved in this strike was of national importance. I was asked by President Murray to congratulate the leadership and membership of this union and to thank those who assisted those who brought about this accord, which we hope will result in a harmonious relationship between the companies and the union in serving the people of New York.

Haywood had a right to be pleased. Unknown to the public he had played a role in the dispute from the very beginning. Before the strike vote was taken, on the evening of Friday, March 7, Quill had telephoned Haywood in Washington and had informed him of the breakdown of negotiations with the Company.

"Where do you stand, Allan?" asked Quill.

"With the TWU, as usual," was the reply.

And that was exactly where he had stood throughout.

Quill's statement follows:

All labor in America, as well as members and officers of the TWU, hail this latest victory of our organization as a stop signal to employers who are about to lead the fight for the cutting of wages throughout the nation. This strike is won only because of the unity and determination of our great industrial union. We want to thank the president of the CIO, Mr. Philip Murray, and Brother Allan Haywood, National Director of the CIO, and the President of the United Mine Workers of America, John L. Lewis, for their excellent co-operation and help given to us.

We want also to thank other labor organizations in the city and country who stood by us with offers of support. We are glad that on Saturday morning the buses will roll once again and that the public of the City of New York will not be further inconvenienced. We want to express our thanks to the public of the City of New York for their patience and support.

Technically, the strike was not yet over. It couldn't be finally terminated until the striking busmen had formally approved their leaders' action and ratified the settlement by a vote. As soon as the agreement had been signed, Bubbles, the mimeograph operator at Transport Hall, was instructed to run off 3500 leaflets calling the Fourth General Strike Meeting on Friday at 9:00 A.M. at the Windsor. Unless something unforeseen arose, the agreement would be ratified at that meeting and the strike would be officially ended.

At Manhattan Center, meanwhile, delegates from many CIO locals were gathered together at the special meeting called by the Industrial Council. They went through the usual order of business, but there was a tense feeling in the air because everybody was waiting for the TWU leaders to turn up with their report of latest developments.

When Quill, Santo, Hogan, Sacher, Mills and a few others on the negotiating committee, accompanied by Allan Haywood, finally arrived, they got a tremendous welcome. It was an occasion for real rejoicing. The meeting had been called originally to consider ways and means of helping the TWU win a victory. Now there was nothing to do but listen and cheer as the Union leaders told the story of how that victory had been won.

Today's settlement came on what ordinarily would have been pay day, but this Thursday there were no envelopes to be picked up by the strikers at the paymasters' windows. Strike benefits had not begun and funds were running low for some of the men's families.

To make it possible for all strikers to meet their current living expenses, the Union offered an easy loan plan. Any one in need of money had only to go to Gus Faber's office and fill out the following form to receive a loan.

NAME .....  
 ADDRESS .....  
 BOOK # ..... BADGE # .....  
 LINE ABOVE WORKS ON .....  
 MARRIED OR SINGLE .....  
 HOW MANY CHILDREN .....  
 WHAT YOU NEED MONEY FOR .....

I the undersigned received as a loan the amount of .....  
 from the Transport Workers Union to be repaid starting with the  
 first pay day after April 15, 1941 at the rate of \$1.00 per week.

---

Signature

(About 60 per cent of the men in both Fifth Avenue and Omnibus borrowed money on this plan. Three weeks after the date of settlement, the Union had distributed over \$30,000. After April 15th the money began to come back.)

While the leaders were closeted with the fact-finding board this afternoon, the rest of the members of the negotiating committee waited in the Board of Estimate chambers. A class of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old school children on a trip through City Hall came into the room. The teacher walked around, pointing out the paintings and other things of interest, but the class didn't follow her. When she had finished her monologue, she turned

to find that most of the boys and girls were gathered around one of the committee members who was in uniform.

The teacher shouted, "What's going on?" and was informed by the busman that Mike Quill and the others were in the next room trying to get the strikers a better standard of living.

She asked crisply, "Why don't you get a different leader?"

The answer came fast, "He's more than satisfactory—we like him and like his work."

She shot back, "Well, you needn't have chosen a foreigner."

So Harry Brown, the bus driver, turning to all the children, went back into history to show how the United States was built by "foreigners"; in a few brief moments he gave the class a lesson in the real meaning of Americanism and democracy—a lesson which, apparently, they wouldn't get from their teacher.

Keane's log:

1:20 P.M.—Brother McCourt phoning from 135th St. Terminal reports that shooflies are all over the system and especially there were two down at the Penn Station this morning, pumping the two men on picket duty down there. There were also two reporters from the Mirror and Journal in Tony's Restaurant, 132nd St. and B'way seeking information from employees assembled there.

2:15 P.M.—I called up 135th St., 54th St., and Jackson Heights Terminals, and told them to be careful not to give any information to shooflies or reporters, as I have been informed several of those lizards are all over the system today. I told them to inform all pickets.

3:00 P.M.—Brother Chas. Milne informs me that Michael Flynn (Sec. 501), 504 W. 139th St., who has been recently in the hospital, and for whom a blood transfusion was solicited among our members a few days ago, just died, and is waked at the above address.

Rauhauser's log:

4:25 P.M.—I phoned this condolence to Mr. Forge for Mr. Keane: "The members of our union, Fifth Avenue Branch, desire to extend through the medium of our bulletin our most sincere sorrow and sympathy to the family and relatives of Michael

Flynn, Boilerman, 504 W. 139th St., N.Y.C., who died today. May God have mercy on his soul. John Keane, Sec. 504."

7:15 P.M.—John Duignan reporting from 135th St. states that the two men in Tony's Restaurant, who were referred to him by one of the garagemen on picket duty outside, were not causing any disruption amongst the other men who were in there as was reported.

9:08 P.M.—Dan Carlin phoned asking to speak to Frank O'Connor. I told him that Frank was down at City Hall yet. Dan left his phone number HA 4-6612 for Frank to call him as soon as he comes in. Dan said he just heard on the radio that both sides agreed to arbitration and buses will be running Saturday.

9:25 P.M.—A lady phoned wanting to know if the radio report was true. I told her we're having a meeting tomorrow morning and we will get the truth about it. She wishes us the best of luck.

11:05 P.M.—Klier, Omnibus driver, phoned wanting to know of the news. I told him picket duty as usual tonight, meeting at Royal Windsor tomorrow morning, 9 A.M.

12:00 P.M.—Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 21

*The Twelfth Day* It was headline news that the bus strike was ended. All the papers thought so and headlined it. It was headline news, too, that the Union won the strike. But only *PM* and the *Daily Worker* headlined that. Anyone reading the rest of the press was told either that it was a "triumph" for the Mayor—which wasn't true—or that the Union might have had the same terms a week ago—which was also not true.

It was the headline and editorial writers who were the worst offenders. While the news accounts also reflected the anti-union bias of the publishers, nevertheless, in a few instances, an honest reporter got an honest story printed. Thus, *The Times* account

this morning, in addition to pointing out that the conference in which Philip Murray participated had laid down "the general formula that led to the settlement," also said, "The settlement was generally regarded as a victory for the union because in any event it will get new contracts at least as favorable as the old agreements."

Had the newspapers been interested in presenting the truth rather than in continuing their attack on the Union, they could have made as clear and concise an analysis of the settlement as one of the strikers made last night, in an interview with a *PM* reporter. The striker said:

Sure it's victory. We struck because the companies insisted on keeping wage cuts and the elimination of sick payments in the negotiations. Now we can't lose. The only question is how much



*Courtesy PM*

Photographers wanted a "Victory" picture. The men were happy to oblige.

*more* pay we will get. No self-respecting union will arbitrate the question of lowering pay when the cost of living is rising and the management is still making good profits. That's the principle for which we went out on strike. We would have stayed out forever. And that's the principle we've made the company see.

This particular striker spoke for all the others. The thirty-five hundred strikers who danced in the aisles at the Windsor this morning knew it was a victory, too. They carried Quill on their shoulders around the hall onto the platform; they marched behind a large placard on which Jack Betwinek had drawn a busman squaring off like a boxer under the slogan, "The Victory Punch"; they threw their caps in the air and cheered as they listened to their leaders tell the story of the final settlement.

Hogan set the tone of the meeting when he said, "The Mayor and the press and the reactionaries were right. We were obstinate, we were bullheaded, but we certainly were not stupid."

Santo summarized the whole struggle from start to finish. He mentioned the press attacks, and the customary boos and shouts of "Throw the *Mirror* out" resounded throughout the hall.

The press [said Santo] belching forth the dirt and the dust in the hearts of the rich against the poor who have been fighting for a larger slice of bread for their children.

And the *New York Sun*, unlike the real sun, because it rises in Wall Street and sets in Wall Street.

The *Mirror*, now, has done us a real service. It has taught the working people of this city a lesson they will never forget about the press—who owns it and how they use it.

Then he explained, in graphic terms, why the negotiating committee had refused to accept the offer of the old contract on Fifth Avenue and arbitration upward on Omnibus alone.

We would not let them divide our ranks. We couldn't be strong with one good hand and one chopped off.

Last Saturday I had this paper in the left pocket of my coat. It was drawn up by Harry Sacher and it says in legal language what we wanted. We got what we wanted. .

Today, seven days after this document was hatched, I have two documents which say the same thing. Here they are:

One for Fifth Avenue.

One for Omnibus.

And they're signed on the dotted line.

He closed with a recital of other transit strikes in New York City—all lost. "This was the only successful transit strike in the history of New York. Every strike, beginning with 1895, 1896, 1905, 1912, 1916, 1920, 1926, and 1934, every one of those strikes was smashed by the bosses and by the politicians."

Loud hurrahs and prolonged cheering greeted the next speaker, Allan Haywood. He began where Santo had ended:

One reason the other transit strikes were lost was because they were organized on a craft basis. You won because you are organized in the new and modern way, on an industrial basis where "an injury to one is the concern of all."

Here is what you have done, my friends. This settlement, this victory is echoing around the country. You have shown the way—no lowering of living standards in a period of rising costs.

Then Haywood read this wire from John L. Lewis:

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS TO THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA, THEIR OFFICERS AND THEIR MEMBERSHIP, UPON THE SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF THEIR REMARKABLY EFFECTIVE STRIKE. I FEEL ASSURED THAT THE FINAL ARBITRAMENT OF THE QUESTIONS IN THIS INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE WILL MEET WITH THE SATISFACTION OF THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP AND CONSTITUTE A COMPLETE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SACRIFICES THEY HAVE MADE.

Mention of the name of Lewis always brings tremendous applause at any TWU meeting. This one was no exception. The cheering was stopped only when Matt Kearns began to speak—and then the audience made the speech with him:

*Kearns:* This is a wonderful meeting.

*[Shouts]:* You're telling us.

*Kearns:* This has been a wonderful strike.

*[Shouts]:* That's right, Matt. One hundred per cent solid.

*Kearns:* I know you have learned a lot about the labor movement.

I know that when you are called upon to help other labor organizations—

*[Shouts]:* We'll be there, Matt!"

It was 11:30 A.M. Austin Hogan stepped forward and read the agreement. Then he announced the convening of a special session of Omnibus Corporation workers. As always, at these meetings, strikers in each company had been directed to separate sections when they had entered the hall. Now Hogan called for a standing vote on the agreement. A solid bloc of Omnibus men arose. They shouted their approval. "Any opposed?" No one. "Passed unanimously."

Special session of Fifth Avenue men. Standing vote. Cheers. "Opposed?" No one. "Passed unanimously."

The great bus strike was officially ended.

Harry Sacher, the next speaker, summarized in a phrase what had happened: "We are still living in a world where power must be the midwife of reason."

Then he expressed his appreciation of the part played by Lewis, Murray, and Haywood. "In the wisdom of their counsel, sobriety of advice, unstinting giving of themselves, they showed what great leaders of labor they were."

Mike Quill had thanks to give also. "I want especially to thank the officers and members of the Ladies' Auxiliary for their hard work and splendid co-operation at all times."

The audience roared with laughter when he said, "I predict that you won't have any strike next year. I am sure that you have served Ritchie and the bankers with a laxative that they won't forget. They will be cleared for a long time."

The TWU had been unsuccessful in getting negotiations started on new contracts for the city-owned subway lines. The old contracts expire June 30. One reason the Union met such vicious opposition in the bus strike was because of the coming subway battle. The bus victory, Quill pointed out, would strengthen the Union in its subway fight. "When June 30 rolls around," said Quill,

we'll take another trip to City Hall, in the hope that we'll find the Mayor in a better mood than he has been in the last few weeks. I'm not saying what will happen. I hope the sensible thing will happen.

If it is all right for private employers to grant collective bargain-

ing, then I am sure that it is right that the City of New York, as an employer of labor, should grant collective bargaining and a closed shop on the unified transit system.

Our only weapon in the fight to protect the workers' standard of living is unity.

The ratification meeting was over.

The men were jubilant. They had a right to be.

They had won a great victory against tremendous odds.

They had displayed a solidarity and strength which gained them the admiration of friends of labor everywhere.

They had added a glorious chapter to American labor history.

Day after day, for twelve days, they had kept their lines unbroken, disciplined, strong.

Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

All picketing was stopped at 12:30 in the afternoon. Mechanics, machinists, elevator operators, oilers, gassers, and cleaners strutted back to the garages to get the buses ready to roll next morning.

Over five hundred delegates, representing AFL and CIO unions, fraternal and civic organizations, turned up at a meeting at the Hotel Edison this evening. Like the Industrial Union Council meeting last night, what was originally called as a rally to mobilize support became a meeting to celebrate a victory.

The afternoon papers had shrieked *QUILL THREATENS SUBWAY TIEUP NEXT*, so the leaders of the Union took this opportunity to make their position clear on the matter of subway contracts. Quill said:

There is no threat of a strike on the city's transit system, and there will be no strike in June if the Mayor and the Board of Transportation are willing to sit down with us and do what they demand that private employers of labor do; bargain collectively with the Union on wages and hours of the city's transit workers.

We are a bit sore that the three commissioners of the Board of Transportation can't make up their minds to give increases to transit workers who are as important to the city's welfare as policemen and firemen. We humbly petition the Mayor—and we ask

him to stop, look, and listen—to sit across the table with us. There is no threat of strike and there need be no strike.

At 4:50 A.M. Saturday, at 59th Street and Sixth Avenue, Operator Parker Eaton stepped on the gas of an Omnibus Corporation bus. He had been at the wheel of this bus hundreds of other times. But this was a special occasion—the first bus to resume operation after the great strike.

At a quarter to six the first Fifth Avenue bus left the Broadway and 132nd Street garage which Frank Hickey had closed at 5:00 A.M. on Monday, March 10.

Martin Graham was at the wheel of the giant double-decker. There was a conductor on the bus, too.



*Courtesy PM*

The Union fought to retain a second man on 5th Avenue coaches.

## Chapter VIII: The "Friend of Labor"

There was no excuse for most of the stuff the newspapers ran as editorials on the bus strike because it was nine-tenths untrue. But there was some excuse for the one thing nearly all of them said—that Mayor LaGuardia was "a friend of labor."

He was—once.

He has the distinction of having his name coupled with the eminent Senator Norris as co-sponsor of a law which was a great boon to labor—the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act, passed by Congress in 1932.

He was one of labor's most ardent champions in those days. As long ago as 1924, in a speech on setting up a Railway Mediation Board, he said on the floor of the House of Representatives:

But when all of the labor of an industry finds that conditions become intolerable and exhaust every remedy for proper adjustment with the capital side of the industry and are compelled to go on strike, then a different situation is created and must be differently considered. After all, labor constitutes the greater part of any industry. The labor side of the industry acquires rights just as the capital side of an industry acquires rights. The law should, therefore, protect the rights of labor as fully as the property rights. I will say frankly I would not take the right of striking away from any man. That is labor's legitimate weapon. That right has been permanently established in this country.

Six years later he spoke on a bill which proposed to investigate communist propaganda. What he said then is of greater importance

today than it was at that time: "Every open-shopper will call everyone who seeks to protect the interests of the workers a bolshevik. Let us not be enticed away on an appeal for security into a movement for the open shop to destroy labor unions in this country."

New York labor showed its appreciation of his efforts on its behalf by helping to elect him Mayor in 1933. Four years later, on June 7, 1937 the *New York Times* ran a front-page story with this head:

## **A 100% UNION CITY AND A CLOSED SHOP PLEGGED BY MAYOR**

The article quotes him as saying to Local 51 of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants Union: "Now the United States recognizes the right of people to organize and bargain collectively. The big thing now is for labor to avail itself of its opportunities to obtain a fair, equitable share of the wealth of this country."

The American Labor Party vote was largely responsible for his re-election in 1937.

But times have changed—and so has Fiorello H. LaGuardia.

On April 22, 1941, the *New York Times* ran another article on Mayor LaGuardia and labor. It quoted Leon Davis, general organizer of the Retail Drug Store Employees Union, Local 1199. Mr. Davis was sore. In his eyes the Mayor was no longer the friend of labor. He was the friend of the corporations. Mr. LaGuardia, said Davis, "apparently has two standards of conduct, one for dealing with corporations and one for dealing with unions, and the corporations are given all the breaks."

What prompted this outburst by a union organizer against the erstwhile champion of labor's rights?

On February 1, 1941, eight hundred Whelan Drug Store employees went out on strike. They were still picketing when the bus strike began. They were still on strike on April 22. Mr. Davis had read in the papers, repeatedly, the Mayor's insistence that the TWU mediate, then arbitrate. He read what the Mayor had said on Friday, March 14, the fifth day of the bus strike (and the forty-second day of the Whelan strike): "I strongly recommend to the men that they return to work and accept arbitration. That is the American way of settling disputes after negotiations have failed."

What made Davis sore was that though his Union wanted to mediate, though it wanted to arbitrate in "the American way," the Company refused to mediate or arbitrate. So the Union wrote to the Mayor and asked him to intervene. They phoned him. They wired him. They distributed fifty thousand circulars asking people to write the Mayor "to take a firm stand in support of arbitration."

Did Mr. LaGuardia come out with a strong statement condemning the Whelan company, as he had the bus strikers?

He did not.

He said—nothing. That's why Leon Davis, labor organizer, is so bitter against this "friend of labor."

But Mayor LaGuardia's attitude toward the Drug Store Employees Union isn't a patch on his attitude toward the Transport Workers Union.

Some Union leaders feel that he sided with the companies in the bus strike because he wanted to smash the TWU before its subway contracts came up for renewal on June 30. They believe that the Mayor's support of the companies did much to keep the strike going even after the companies were really ready for a settlement.

At any rate, his position in regard to the TWU's contracts with the city-owned subways is peculiar, to say the least. That's what Philip Murray suggested in a letter he wrote the Mayor on April 10:

Your position seems to rest upon two assumptions, both of which I think are unwarranted. You assume, firstly, that there is an inherent inconsistency between collective bargaining and the civil service; and secondly, that the wages, hours and working condi-

tions of the employees on the New York city-owned transit lines are fixed by law, and that there is, therefore, nothing that can be accomplished through the collective bargaining process.

The problem of the Union's contracts with the city-owned subways is a complicated one. Wages, hours and working conditions are not fixed by law but by the three-man Board of Transportation. The Union wants to bargain collectively with that Board; it wants to discuss the whole transit problem with the Mayor and the Board. It has written the Mayor asking for a conference to talk things over. But the Mayor—the same man who said in 1931, and repeatedly since, "Employees and employers sit at a conference table. That is the American way of solving labor problems"—has, to date, refused to meet with the TWU.

One explanation of this disturbing change in the man is that Mr. LaGuardia is now himself an employer of labor. As Mayor of the City of New York he is the employer of the largest group of transit workers in the world. His attitude has changed because he has become a boss. As boss he has adopted the open-shop, union-busting tactics of fifty years ago.

The trend today is for government to move into fields hitherto reserved for private industry. This raises an important problem. Let forward-looking people ask themselves this question: Is the pattern set by Mayor LaGuardia the one to be followed as private industry becomes public enterprise?

Even the *New Republic*, long one of the staunchest admirers of Mr. LaGuardia, takes issue with him on his position on the subway situation. In the issue of May 5, 1941, it said editorially:

He seems to have forgotten everything he ever knew about how crucial collective bargaining is for the economic health of the community, and how it ought to be carried on. He and the Board of Transportation have expressed their intention, when the collective-bargaining agreements between the unions and the subway companies expire in June, not to renew them; they have begun court action to void the contracts; they have made eleventh-hour civil-service concessions to the subway workers which are clearly intended to cut the ground from under the unions; and the Mayor

has helped push through the state legislature the Wicks bill, which—whatever its intent—is so loosely slung that its prison penalties hang like a club over the unions in any potential strike.

In short, the Mayor is being provocative in much more than his usual verbally picturesque way. He is acting provocatively, like any anti-labor corporation trying to smash a union. . . .

Both sides have been arguing the question of the right to strike in government employment, the Mayor denying it and Mr. Quill affirming it. The issue may have to be faced some day, but meanwhile it is unfortunate to make it the central and mooted question. The Mayor must know that trade-union organization has existed for many decades among government employees, both in America and Europe. It has existed among the postal employees, among navy-yard and government-arsenal workers and cantonment-construction workers. By refusing to negotiate at all with the TWU leaders, the Mayor is in effect denying the right of the trade union to exist among government employees. And here he is not, as he may perhaps think, charting the future, but turning his back upon the past, brusquely and blindly. There can be no doubt of the right of workers in government employment and even under the civil service to organize in trade unions. As for their right to strike, considered as an abstract question, there can again be no doubt that it exists, except in the actual military forces where the standards of the labor movement do not obtain. . . .

Surely the Mayor has seen enough of life to know that you cannot solve labor difficulties by the use of the big stick except in the coercive monopoly state; and that the anti-union rabble-rousing he has been indulging in is being lapped up eagerly by men who hate the name of LaGuardia as much as they hate the name of Quill.

In the bus strike the Mayor went off half-cocked against the Union before he had discussed the issues with the TWU, and in another bus strike, five weeks later, he did the same thing.

On Tuesday, April 29, 101 bus drivers and 31 mechanics struck against Jamaica Buses, Inc. which operates sixty-five buses in Queens. They were members of the TWU, and as in the Fifth Avenue and Omnibus strike, the walkout was 100 per cent effective. The men struck for higher wages—they were getting seventy

cents an hour, fifteen cents less than the rate prevailing on other Queens bus lines.

The Mayor didn't bother to investigate the facts but came out with his customary blast against the TWU:

The strike of course is unlawful. It is just another typical example of irresponsible leadership.



*Courtesy PM*

"We will never accept arbitration downward."

It is entirely irresponsible, disregarding contractual rights, and is indifferent and callous to the convenience and comfort of the people.

I suppose in this case, as in the Fifth Avenue Co., the men are not at all to blame. The leaders assumed a contract from another organization which does not expire until October 22, 1941.

Therefore as far as I can see, the strike is improper and contrary to the agreement and these facts will be taken into cognizance.

Those were hard words, particularly since they didn't fit the case. It was a rank-and-file strike—the Union leaders were not aware it was going to happen. The strikers had voted nineteen times in the past year to strike, and each time TWU leaders persuaded them not to. Was this “another typical example of irresponsible leadership”?

The strikers drove around the streets of Jamaica hauling passengers to subway stations free. Was this being “indifferent and callous to the convenience and comfort of the people”?

The TWU backed the strike, when they learned of it, because the men had legitimate grievances. TWU leaders and Company representatives met with Arthur Meyer at the offices of the State Mediation Board, and after conferring for two days came to a compromise agreement: Drivers' hourly pay was increased from seventy cents to seventy-seven cents and mechanics' from fifty-two to ninety cents to sixty cents to one dollar. Grievance machinery for handling disputes was set up.

TWU officials tell an interesting story of another sudden bus strike in Queens, against the North Shore Bus Company, Inc., the largest in the Borough. It happened in February, 1941, and this time the Mayor did not question the right of the men to strike, issued no blasts against them, nor did he condemn the Union in any way. In fact, they say, even though the Union had asked the drivers to accept a four-cent increase, from seventy-seven cents to eighty-one cents, on the ground that the Company couldn't pay more, the Mayor called the Company representatives to City Hall and made them grant an increase of eight cents immediately—before the men returned to work—and then arbitrate upward to one dollar an hour!

There's a catch to the story, of course. The Union was not the TWU, but the Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America, affiliated with the AF of L.

Talk to a TWU member and he'll tell you that the Mayor's hostility to the Union stems from his desire to go places politically—even if he has to walk over the corpse of the TWU to get there. He may want to run for a third term as Mayor, or he may have his eye on something in Washington. By cracking down on the militant TWU he is proving to the Big Boys that, in spite of his reputation as a friend of labor, he's really OK.

Many people think that if Mr. LaGuardia does decide to run for Mayor, his unimpeachable record of honesty and clean government will surely make him the winner. That isn't necessarily so. Tammany isn't dead yet and the race may be close. Perhaps Mr. LaGuardia's fierce antagonism to the TWU can be traced to an effort to corral votes from the middle and upper classes to make up for those he will have lost among the working class. At any rate such an aim would serve as an explanation for the way he handled the bus strike. If the reaction of the press serves as a guide, such a result was accomplished. This was the first time in his career as Mayor that every newspaper, from *The Times* to the *Sun*, gave him such unequivocal support.

Then there's the war situation. The Mayor lines up with the Administration program; the TWU lines up with John L. Lewis, who opposes that program on the ground that it leads to war. The Mayor wants nothing to stand in the way of the "war effort"; the TWU won't yield an inch on labor's economic demands. The Mayor sees fascism abroad as labor's greatest enemy; the TWU sees fascism here, in the shape of those who would deprive American workers of an increasingly higher standard of living, as labor's greatest enemy.

This is all speculation, of course. But it's speculation on an important question: Why the name of Fiorello H. LaGuardia, which once brought cheers, now brings boos and hisses from transit workers and other labor groups in New York City.

## Chapter IX: The Press Is Big Business

Heywood Broun, founder of the American Newspaper Guild, and one of the greatest newspapermen who ever lived, once wrote:

The making of a modern newspaper is Big Business. Big Business does not want to see the growth of trade unionism. . . .

The American newspaper is the first line of defense of Big Business.

Newspapers break more strikes than the National Guard or company police. . . .

Had Broun lived he could have pointed to the newspapers' handling of the bus strike as the almost perfect example. Almost—because this was one strike they didn't break. But they tried. They tried as hard as any newspapers ever did in all American labor history.

Not the New York City newspapers alone. The press everywhere in the country sang the same song of hate for the TWU and its leadership. Not a single out-of-town commercial newspaper had a good word to say in behalf of the strikers.

They had lots of good words to say for every anti-strike bill proposed by every crack-pot reactionary Congressman. The defense program made it open hunting season on any workers who struck because they were denied a share of their employers' war profits. It is difficult to determine whether Representative Hatton Sumners, who advocated the electric chair for strikers, got his idea from the newspapers or they from him.

Federated Press, a news service which, unlike the Associated Press and the United Press, furnishes the whole truth about labor to labor newspapers all over the country, conducted a significant survey recently. It asked the editors of labor papers in fifty-seven cities to answer this question: "Have the daily papers in your area shown increased unfairness to labor in recent months?" Ninety-two per cent voted "Yes."

Editors of labor papers have long been aware of the tie-up between the press and Big Business. Workers themselves have, too often, been unaware. But they learn fast—through their own struggles. That's what happened to the bus strikers. They knew the truth about the strike. They read the lies in the newspapers. They learned an important lesson.

What Heywood Broun wrote, what the strikers learned, is now in a government document for all to read and reflect on. The following quotations are from Monograph No. 26, *Economic Power and Political Pressures*, a study made for the use of the Temporary National Economic Committee. It can be obtained from the Government Printing Office:

The American Bar Association has . . . indicated its fundamental community of interest with business. The American Newspaper Publishers' Association shares a similar community of interest. This community of interest is reflected in the opinions which these and other professional and business organizations publish, and which are essentially projections of the philosophy of industrial management as conceived by business and industry. . . .

Through the American Newspaper Publishers Association the country's daily newspapers join their strength for business and against government. . . .

The revolution in communications, produced by American ingenuity and promoted by American business, makes the press, the radio, and other opinion-forming instruments far more important in the political process than ever before. Both press and radio are, after all, "big business," and even when they possess the highest integrity, they are the prisoners of their own beliefs. . . .

. . . newspapers have it in their power materially to influence public opinion on particular issues. When it comes to measuring particular situations of fact against general principles and pre-

sending the comparison as news, newspapers are shapers of opinion as well as purveyors of fact. Editors are aware of this, of course, and many take special precautions to avoid it. With others, editorializing is practiced as a matter of course. And even where editors and publishers are men of the highest integrity, they are owners and managers of big business enterprises, and their papers inevitably reflect, at least to some extent, their economic interest. When organized business deliberately propagandizes the country, using newspaper advertising as one medium, the press is a direct means of channeling business views into the public mind.

What about *PM*? Does the fact that it does not take advertising account for its decent coverage of the strike? Not entirely. There may have been other reasons.

The editor of *PM*, who was himself primarily responsible for the extensive treatment the paper gave the strike, may have been honestly convinced that the bus strikers were in the right. Or he may have seized the opportunity to win back from the CIO unions the support he lost in December, following a series of smear attacks on John L. Lewis. Or he may have been desirous, by whatever means, to win more of labor to his pro-war policy. But, whatever the reasons, good or bad, the fact remains that *PM* did a meritorious job on the strike.

George Seldes, outstanding authority on the crimes of the press, published a very interesting letter in the April 7, 1941, number of his publication *In Fact*. The letter serves to illustrate that the villain in the piece is seldom the reporter but the people in control of policy:

I am a working NY newspaperman, author of one of the anti-labor quotations concerning the TWU strike noted by *In Fact* Mar. 24 issue. . . . I, like so many other newspapermen, was forced to write these dishonest slanders on the strikers because of policy-dictated orders from the lying, anti-labor management of my own paper.

I feel that we who work at the news and who are forced in order to retain our jobs to concoct such falsehoods, should in other ways dissociate ourselves from our professional prostitution. I am giving my name and documentation to *In Fact*. . . . I suggest that

newsmen on all the anti-labor publications in NY furnish *In Fact* with similar instances to prove that the press does not reflect the beliefs of its own employes; and to expose from within the treachery and corruption of the American press.

“Treachery” and “corruption” are strong words. But they are not too strong in this case. It is to the everlasting credit of the striking busmen that they stood firm in the face of the venomous assault by strike-breaking newspapers.

## Chapter X: Mike Quill

The name of Michael J. Quill in headlines should bring back cherished memories to some of the Ministers in the present Government of Ireland. They will recall with pride those nights at the height of the Black and Tan War in 1918-1919, when they were safely hidden in the lad's birthplace at Gurtloughera, three miles from the village of Kilgarvan, County Kerry. Because the small farmhouse in the mountains was almost impossible to reach at night, it made an ideal hideaway for Irish revolutionists wanted by the Black and Tans. It was home and headquarters for fourteen-year-old Michael who carried a rifle as a member of C Company, 3rd Battalion, Kerry No. 2 brigade in the Irish Republican Army.

He was the second youngest of eight children. His four brothers and three sisters with their parents were all "in the movement," and in the bloody years of strife following 1918 few of them managed to stay out of jail for any length of time.

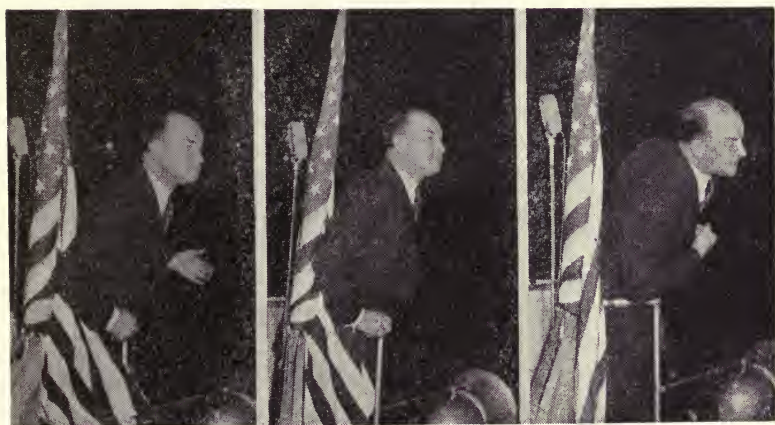
Michael did. But although he was never captured during the wars, the authorities caught up with him in peace time. He and a brother were arrested in August, 1925 and thrown into jail for their part in the woodcutters' strike for higher wages. They won their case and went back to the picket line. This, Michael's first strike, was fought to a successful finish by the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. And ever since Michael Quill landed in New York on March 16, 1926, except for a few odd temporary jobs, his whole life has been bound up with the transit industry.

Shortly after his arrival, he helped dig the 168th Street station on the Eighth Avenue subway as a pick and shovel laborer for the Roger and Heggarty Construction Co.; then came a rapid succes-



*Transport Photo*

Quill at a mass meeting.



*Transport Photo*

"Because we want more of the better things in life . . ."

sion of jobs as guard for the Long Island R.R., and gateman, platform man, and ticket agent for the Interborough.

His associates in founding the TWU recognized early that Quill's ability as a speaker and organizer made it imperative that he devote all his time to organizing. So in 1935 he quit working for the transit lines and began working full time for the men who worked in transit.

Quill is one of the great labor orators of our day. His name on the program is a warning to get to the meeting early or you won't get a seat. His colorful, imaginative, Irish wit captivates his audiences. He wins them to his side with his earthy humor, his ability to illustrate profound points with homely analogies within the workers' experiences. He can demolish the other side's arguments by giving them a humorous twist which makes them appear ridiculous.

Thus, after the Union had won its victory, Quill explained the TWU's opposition to the Fifth Avenue Coach Company's demand for one-man operation of its giant buses in this fashion:

We said we didn't want to arbitrate the question of throwing the second man off the bus. We said we didn't want to throw anybody off the bus—we are opposed to violence.

Then the company wanted us to arbitrate the question of one-man after 7 P.M. We said we couldn't do that—imagine what might go on after dark on the top of one of those elephant buses.

Most audiences would like that if anyone said it. They love it when it's told to them in the delightful brogue of Mike Quill.

Because he is such a convincing speaker, other unions, constantly facing crises of one sort or another, appeal to him for help. He never turns them down. He will speak for any group, large or small, if they are fighting for the things he believes important. At times his schedule includes as many as four or five meetings an evening—this after a full day in the office!

For a person who is under such constant strain, his even temper and cheerful disposition are to be marveled at. No matter how tense a situation, Mike has the ability to put everyone at ease. The explanation of his good nature in periods of stress is his sense of

humor—his ability to see and make capital of whatever is funny in any situation.

As a general rule, Mike disdains technicalities and small details but he can master them when he needs to. His secretary, Esther Greene, has a wholesome respect for his memory: "I have known him to ask one morning for a letter that had come in to the office months before—something that I had already forgotten. He will recall that in the particular letter something had been asked for and had not been taken care of. In a case like that I never argue with him, because I have learned from experience that he is right."

When Mike has a moment to relax—which isn't often—he makes the most of it. Music refreshes him. He loves to sing—or if he feels especially cheerful, he pulls out his ten-cent flute, puts his feet on the desk, and plays an Irish tune. If he's a little off key and you chide him for it, he will inform you that he is playing Gaelic and you couldn't be expected to appreciate it.

On those rare occasions when he has a whole day off, he likes to pack up his family in his Dodge car and ride off to the country. There he will lie in the sun for hours with his pretty blonde wife, Mollie, while carrying on an endless conversation with John D., his handsome two-year-old son.

He had been keeping company with Mollie for seven years; and in 1936, after he became full-time organizer for the Union, she went back to Ireland. He promised her that if he remained alive after the next few years of organization work he would go to Ireland to claim her.

In 1937 the dangerous pioneering days were over; so he took a trip to Ireland to claim his betrothed.

He married Mollie in Ireland on December 26, 1937, and came home to take up his duties as newly-elected City Councilman. He speaks of his two-year service as Councilman with scorn. "There was still a Tammany majority in the Council and the meetings were no different than the meetings of the Board of Aldermen in the days of Boss Tweed."

In that sentence lies a clue to the bitter attacks which have been, and are being, made on Mike Quill. He is a reformer. He thinks the working class is getting a raw deal and he is trying to do some-

thing about it. He pulls no punches in his war on those whom he considers the enemies of his Union and of the working class. He is a staunch, courageous fighter—absolutely without fear.

He is loved as is nobody else in the Union. He commands the respect of the men because he has, in his own person, taken all the attacks aimed at the Union, and has never retreated a single inch.

In the bus strike the papers, always hostile, had a field day. "And leading the parade as usual," says Mike, "was Martin Dies who rushed to the fore with his semi-annual report."

Reactionary attacks on Quill are severe not only because he is a militant two-fisted, hard-hitting fighter, but also because he is a staunch supporter of the program and policies of John L. Lewis and Philip Murray. The open attack on Quill is a veiled attack on those two great labor leaders.

Quill has been called a communist often and long. He answers the charge in characteristic fashion: "I would rather be called a 'Red' by the rats than to be called a 'rat' by the Reds."

The majority of the members of the TWU are Irish Catholics who share their Church's hostility toward communism. Undoubtedly some of them have been disturbed by the repeated charge that "Mike Quill is a Red." A few believe it. But most of them don't—and many wouldn't care even if it were true. It takes only a little experience in the labor movement to learn that what John Brophy, CIO Director of Industrial Union Councils, said at the second biennial convention of the TWU in September, 1939, has a great deal of merit:

We know that when our self-styled friends call our attention to all the evils of our movement, when they tell us to get rid of our leaders because, they say, those leaders are "reds" or "extremists" or "Stalinists" or the like, their motives are something less than those of pure altruism. . . . They are not interested in "reds" or "Stalinists" or "extremists" as such. Their pretended interest in philosophy or ideologies is a mask for a much more real interest, which is the interest of anti-union employers, of our enemies. They call on us to "purge" our movement of all whom they describe as "reds" or "aliens" or the like only when these so-called "reds" are militant, progressive labor leaders. You never read a newspaper

editorial calling for a purge of do-nothing labor officials. . . . Labor officials don't earn such distinguished attention so long as they sit in swivel chairs and confine their activities to denouncing the living, effective labor movement. On the contrary, they get nothing but praise and friendly editorial attention—and their members get nothing at all.

It is because the members of the TWU do not belong to a union from which they "get nothing at all," that the charge of "communist" hasn't dampened the affection of the transit workers for their militant leader. The wife of a Fifth Avenue bus conductor on the "extra" list spoke for the great majority in the Union when she said:

Before this union I saw my husband out seven days a week, dawn to dark and he brought home \$11 at the end of the week. Now he works six days, shorter hours, and he averages \$33 a week. Before, he never got a day off. Now he has a paid vacation.

Our leaders are honest. We trust them. Mike Quill was a good fighter in Ireland and he's a good fighter here. He can be red, white, black or yellow. I'm for him just the same. He saved my husband's job.

Therein lies the secret of Mike Quill's success. His charm, sense of humor, limitless energy, oratorical ability and other gifts served to attract his followers in the first instance, but they are not the stuff which has held the workers together through one crisis after another. It was the Union which did it. Mike Quill's strength lies in the Union which he helped to build.

The TWU has bettered the conditions of the transit workers. They haven't forgotten that in the past. Nor will they in their present, most crucial struggle. They will stick to the man who, in spite of all his worldly achievements, remains a plain son of the plain people of County Kerry—and by that token, a good American.

# Chapter XI: The *Great* Bus Strike

In the United States, strikes are won and lost almost every week of the year. To the workers involved they are always of utmost importance. To the labor movement as a whole they may or may not have great significance. Some are included in the statistics of the Department of Labor and leave no other permanent record; others get a few paragraphs in the convention proceedings of the particular international union involved; a few belong in the pages of every adequate history of labor's struggles.

The bus strike was one of those few. It deserves the title "great" because of the period in which it was fought and won, the numbers and strength of the forces in opposition, and the lessons to be learned from it.

March, 1941, was a period of feverish preparations for war. In such a period the conflict between capital and labor becomes sharper. Always, at such a time, reactionaries and labor-baiters become more vociferous than ever before. They urge the passage of measures which in ordinary times would have little chance of being adopted. Because these are not ordinary times, and because the reactionaries take advantage of the situation to play up the slogan of "national defense" and war-time necessity, they succeed in getting a hearing for their anti-labor bills.

The campaign against labor is aided by press scare-heads. Employers increase their resistance to the legitimate demands for wage increases by the workers. They try, more fiercely than ever before, to smash workers' organizations. Every union is in danger of being crushed.

Labor must fight harder not only to protect its old gains but to win the increases necessary to meet the rising cost of living. The combined opposition of employers, politicians, and the press, always present in labor-capital disputes, becomes much more closely knit in its effort to break down the challenge of the unions. More money, more pressure, more propaganda than capital ordinarily uses, is employed in an effort to demolish the workers' movement.

This was the setting for the bus strike. The eyes of the labor world were turned on the struggle of the bus drivers and the TWU.

If the strikers lost here, then workers would meet with fiercer attacks everywhere; if the strikers won, then new impetus would be given to the Ford drive in Detroit, the steelworkers' drive against Bethlehem, the packinghouse workers' drive in Chicago, the sanitation workers' drive in New York City, organizational efforts of all workers, in all industries.

The bus strikers won. They won because their cause was just; their ranks were solid; they were organized on an industrial basis; their leadership was honest and able—it knew when to be firm and when to be flexible; their organization of the strike and discipline during it were magnificent; they asked for and received the support of other workers, and of the heads of the CIO both locally and nationally.

It was not a lucky accident that there was not a single scab. It was not just a happen-so that the number of men who either partially or completely shirked their duty on the picket line, or were delinquent in any other way, added up to a total of less than 1 per cent of the thirty-five hundred on strike. The unity, militancy, and spirit of the strikers was the product of years of education and training through democratic methods in a democratic Union.

One of the strikers was asked to explain the reason for the solidarity of men. His answer was as illuminating as any:

The workers on Fifth Avenue and Omnibus, for the past few years, were gradually developing the unity and militant active unionist attitude shown so well on the picket line.

Through monthly meetings, where free discussion took place, grievances and working conditions were brought to the fore and explained.

Discussion by chairman and other officers on all labor news throughout the country, also politics, good and bad, gave the workers a thorough knowledge of issues, such as cost of living, profits of corporations and how to protect their rights.

When the call came to strike, the workers were ready. They took their places on picket lines or in other union activity with a firm determination to win.

This was the preparation for the struggle. To insure a victory there had also to be competent planning and administration of the strike itself. The organizational machinery for running this strike might well serve as a model to other unions.

No disastrous slip-up was possible under the scheme that was worked out. There was a constant check on every phase of activity at every point no matter how far from Transport Hall. Continuous communication between picket lines, field headquarters, and Union headquarters, both by telephone and private cars, meant prompt and effective handling of every situation.

Was it necessary to answer the latest blast by the Mayor or the press? Then Union officials and key men, on duty twenty-four hours round the clock, were on hand to discuss the problem and write the answer; mimeograph operators and printers were always available to turn out the leaflets as required—3500, 100,000, 500,000; cars were waiting to carry the bundles to the various distribution points. In a few hours everyone on the picket line had read the leaflet, uniformed busmen were outside Madison Square Garden ready to pass them out to people leaving the boxing match or basketball game, and the general public everywhere—going into church, window-shopping, emerging from jammed subway cars—had the leaflets handed to them.

Was it bitter cold on the picket line, necessitating more frequent relief? A phone call to Omnibusmen Betwinek or Lambe, to Fifth Avenue men Keane or Rauhauser, told the story; it was relayed to the officials downstairs; emergency pickets, waiting for assignments, were dispatched at once.

Did a weary picket after hours on the line think to warm himself with just one quick one . . . then stay for a second, and a fourth? Before he got tipsy and into an argument, Union checkers, making regular rounds of all bars on all routes, spotted him and took him home.

Was a batch of picket signs ruined by exposure to rain and snow? Phone call . . . supply room . . . waiting cars . . . replacements made.

No delays, no mix-ups, no trouble.

Everything OK. Strike 100 per cent effective. No disorder anywhere.

While the forces opposed to the Union maneuvered to bring about the isolation of the strikers, the Union leaders maneuvered to widen the base of the strike.

The other transit workers were involved from the beginning; they gave donations to the strike fund, helped out on the picket lines, distributed leaflets, made speeches.

The families of the strikers were brought into the struggle. They went to meetings, stamped envelopes, picketed.

The other CIO unions were lined up through the CIO Industrial Council.

Other workers' organizations—particularly Irish clubs—were visited and their support enlisted through presentation of the facts by strikers released from duty on the picket line.

CIO national leaders were consulted, their advice was asked for, their backing obtained.

Publicity was given to the Union side in official announcements from the leaders. When newspapers cut Union releases, or distorted the facts, then Union leaflets giving the Union case were distributed to the public.

The solidarity and good discipline of the men made for increased solidarity and better discipline. Drivers and conductors who had quarreled before and weren't speaking to each other were thrown together during the strike and became friends again. Many men who had formerly been just dues-paying members were converted into good unionists by the strike.

The task of the leaders was to use the power that was theirs,

because of the effectiveness of the strike, so skillfully as not to antagonize the public, and to force a good settlement from the companies that were losing revenue daily. They had to know when and what to yield, where and when to remain immovable. They had to pick the exact moment to mediate, and the proper time to accept arbitration; they had to report to the men and gauge their attitude; they had to steer a course dexterously and expertly.

**The TWU had to win. It did.**

Its victory was convincing proof that solidarity means strength—great strength that cannot be overcome even by the combined forces of employers, politicians, and the press.

That was a never-to-be-forgotten lesson for labor everywhere.

The strike was over. The tension was eased, the strain broken. Back to normal.

But for the members of the TWU there was still work to be done. A great deal was learned before the strike and while it was going on. There was much to be learned after the strike was over. The discipline that helped to make the strike successful must not be relaxed. It is difficult to build a union and make it strong. It is easy to let a union disintegrate. As John L. Lewis, out of the wisdom of his thirty-three years of labor experience, has often said: "There are two things that are hard in our world. One, to get something; two, to keep it." The members of the TWU know that.

On April 2, twelve days after the strike was over, fifteen men assembled for a meeting in Room B at Transport Hall. The Committee to Investigate Laxity in Picketing was holding its first session.

In a pile on the desk were the picket cards of all the busmen. As the chairman read the names, members of the Committee shouted "OK"; or "Put him aside for investigation."

Some names brought discussion. "Did you see him on the line?"

"Yes, he reported every day, but one, at 54th St. He was excused by the picket captain that day because he had a cold."

Or: "He picketed. He was 100 per cent OK." Then triumphantly, "He was a strike-breaker in 1916."

So it went. Full report of strike duty performance on every man.

A handful of cards put aside for further investigation before a trial board.

The conversation about one name best illustrates the spirit that has made the Transport Workers Union one of the most powerful in the country. The full flavor of the scene is lost because you cannot hear the brogue, but anyway, you get the idea from what was said:

' "He's OK. He wasn't on the picket line because he was home with a broken arm."

"Oh, he had a broken arm, did he? And did that prevent him from walking?"





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